September 1995 - Volume 12, No 9
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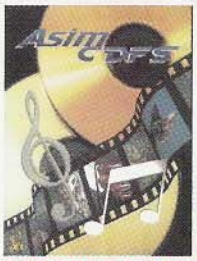

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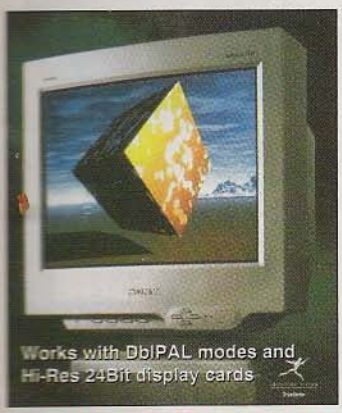

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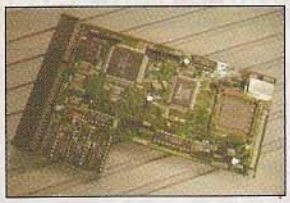

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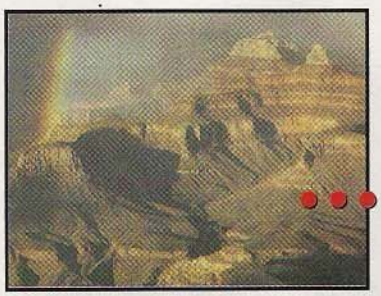
CONTENTS

September, '95
Vol 12, No 9

Features

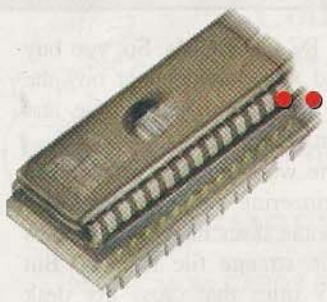
11 Hot Amiga news
Want to know the latest? Read on!

17 Amiga netsurfing
The coolest sites for Amiga users!



54 Almathera Ten on Ten
CD-ROM super packs come to the Amiga...

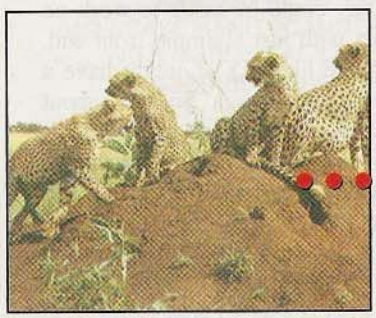
Articles



28 Guru-ROM
More speed for your GVP controller - only $140!

36 Net news
Interesting places, regulation attempts...

43 POSWIZ
Point-of-sale computing on the Amiga



50 Aminet 7 and Prima 1
Two more PD CD-ROMS!

65 Games
Speedball II, Super Skidmarks, PGA Tour, ViroCop reviewed.

78 Modemspeak
AT commands made easy!

Cover created by Jarrod Pudsey
Image: 1500 x 2000
Program: Lightwave 3.5
Machine: A4000/040/40MHz

Regulars

4 Editorial
8 Notepad
10 Media Watch
20 Letters
22 Help Line
27 Subscribe
30 Online
32 Wordprocessing
34 Workbench
44 Hot PD
48 Desktop Publishing
58 Reader Classifieds
60 Back Issues
63 Market Place
62 User Groups
74 Art Gallery
80 Ad Index

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Amigas headed downunder

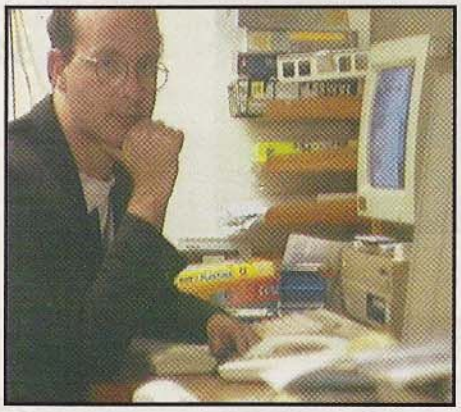
Every month I sit down to write this column there seems to be something positive to share. The trying thing is that the increments are oh so small. The good news for September? ESCOM, the people who own the new Amiga Technologies, have set up their UK distribution.

Amiga Tech UK have been made responsible for distribution downunder! This issue of Amiga Review was held back in the hope that the local distributor could be announced. Well, one very nearly has it in the bag - but was unfortunately unable to lock off on things prior to our final, final deadline.

As it stands, local supply of machines is now only a matter of weeks away, and by next issue we should be able to tell you who it is.

The problem is, Amiga Technology might be able to solve the hardware dilemma, but making up for lost ground on the software front is a tad more difficult. Here's a suggestion to the world of Amiga developers that we've been bouncing around here at Storm Front Studios.

It is true that CD-ROM titles are driving the home computer market explosion right now. It is a shame that some of the best titles are not headed for the Amiga. But there may be a simple way around the problem. Instead of trying to build our own Encarta equivalent, why not simply develop a front end that runs on the Amiga and looks at the text files, animation and graphics stored on one of



these many PC CD-ROMs. So, you buy Encarta, and you download or buy the program to read the files, browse and display them on the Amiga.

Yes, some work may be involved in reverse engineering some of the index files. Yes, some discs have the graphics embedded in strange file formats. But many, many titles that cross my desk don't. Many could be made to work on the Amiga with just a simple front end. Even a game like MYST might have a chance on a fast Amiga. So, how about it? A really smart player might try licensing some of the know how to make the production easier from a PC title publisher. They'll probably figure the market is tiny and sell the rights real cheap.

By Andrew Farrell

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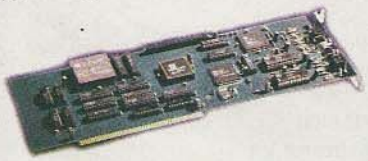

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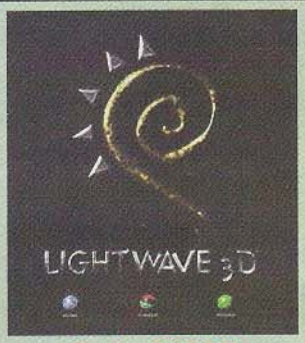

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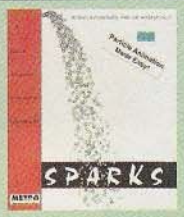

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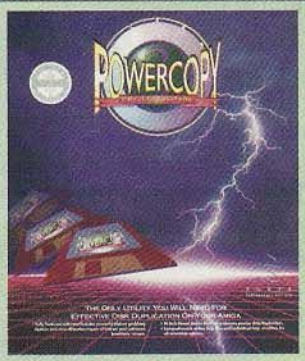

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FantaSeas

While not specifically an Amiga title, this is produced by Fred Fish's Amiga Library Services so we feel obliged to give it a plug. FantaSeas is a two-CD set containing the thick end of 300 high quality underwater photographs in Photo CD format. Reefs, wrecks, close-ups - if it's interesting and underwater, it's probably on these discs.

All of the photos are royalty free, provided you don't print more than 5000 copies and you send a copy of whatever you produce to the manufacturers.

You need a Photo CD compatible drive (just about all of them) and appropriate viewing software (plenty around, although AsimCDFS's excellent transparent conversion to IFF is the best), and of course an AGA or 24 bit capable Amiga is a good idea if you want to see the pictures in their full glory.

Local distribution has yet to be announced; contact Amiga Library Services on 0011 1 +602 491 0048 for more information.

SX-1 Lives!

There's been a flurry of changes of ownership and responsibility in the recently-passed months of Amiga uncertainty, and one of the many machinations was the old manufacturers of the SX-1 CD32 expansion box, Paravision, transferring the device to HiTech Components. Paravision purchased Microbotics, another Amiga expansion manufacturer, around the same time. The upshot of all this is that the SX-1 is back in production. The fifth production run was slated for shipping in mid-August, but the quantities involved are apparently small - by the time you read this, it may be too late to get in orders for this run, though of course sufficient demand will encourage more production. Call your dealer if you're interested.

New FrozenFish out

The latest edition of Fred Fish's FrozenFish archive CD for all CD-ROM capable computers has been released, with 1100 compressed Fish floppies and sundry other software from the FreshFish update CDs.

Each Fish disk comes in its own archive, and there's also 102 Mb of animations and graphics utilities, 74 Mb of pictures, 16 Mb of games and related material, and the CBM Native Developer Update Kits V37, V39, & V40 (except for the autodocs). Look for a review soon!

Cloanto PNG Toolkit

GIF is probably the most popular image format in the world. It's small, it's quick to display on fast machines, and it stores 256 colour images, which are good enough for most people. But it also belongs to Unisys Corporation, who are demanding royalties on the GIF code, so anyone making GIF saving or loading programs has to pay a slice. Huge controversy has been sparked by the ongoing GIF saga, and one of the upshots has been Portable Network Graphics (PNG). This new format is compressed and lossless, like GIF, but can store 24 bit images as well, and it's slowly gaining support around the world.

Cloanto, the makers of Personal Paint, have a toolkit out containing a PNG DataType for OS3+ Amigas, some information on the GIF controversy, sample source code to use DataTypes and an ARexx script for Personal Paint to automatically find GIFs and convert them to PNG. There's also a deluxe version of the toolkit with test files, full PNG specs, documentation and more code, and you can get it on the Cloanto Personal Suite CD-ROM (soon to be available in Australia - watch this space!).

You can get the regular version of the PNG Toolkit free from Aminet - or you will be able to, anyway, when Cloanto actually put it there. When it becomes available, we'll make it available to the Net-challenged. In the meantime, feel free to call Cloanto Italy on +39 432 545902.

CD32 set-top boxes!

Think Video Interactive (TVI) is a company headed by Duncan Fraser, an ex-Commodore Canada employee. The company is working on various online projects, including software for the CD32 to turn it into a cheap set-top box that any online banking service provider can use. It's these sorts of projects that look like keeping the CD32 alive, at least in some form.

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Video van

C. Kelly of Oxenford, Qld, sent a picture of a Nissan Urvan-mounted video edit and processing suite for Sports Channel Video on the Gold Coast. As you ought to be able to see form the picture, among the monitors, VTRs and other video hardware is an A1200 and a Neriki genlock, used to overlay titles and display messages to monitors at sports venues all over the coast.

Job lot

Dean Cocoran of Bathurst, NSW, decided to save up his spottings until he had a lot, which is not the way to get a free sub since people will beat you to it on the older ones but since he seemed happy to send us money for magazines we suppose that didn't matter to him. He spotted an Amiga on Prime News on the 19th of June, during one of those worthy and completely accurate stories on child porn on the Internet, with a late model Deluxe Paint being used to show unsavoury pictures.

In the very very bad movie Highlander III (he didn't actually say the very very bad bit but we feel compelled to warn anyone other there who might waste money on video rental) what looked like Scala on what might have been a 1084S monitor was being used for some sort of irrelevant computerey purpose in between plotless swordfights.

At a Mitchell University booze-up with a nominal beach party theme, he observed a surfing simulator in which you stand on a surfboard and by swaying make a guy on screen do snow boarding (Perfectly logical. Shut up). It transpired that this system was based on a CD32 - though Dean didn't think it did it justice.

The incredibly hip and happening Bianca Video Disco, no doubt the epicentre of the Central West rave scene, uses an A500 with genlock to put titles on their videos, run occasional live messages on the disco screens and also put animations, Amiga logos and occasional unintentional Workbench screens behind videoless tunes.

Dodgy movie

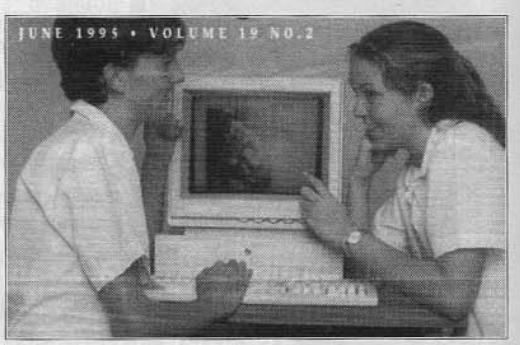
Jeff Sereno, of Dural, NSW was watching the movie "Wild Justice" on the 15th of July on Channel 7, and spotted an A1500 near the end being used as a "targetting" computer, tracking a boat for destruction. In a leap of implausibility worthy of SeaQuest DSV (another Roy Scheider vehicle), the targetting system was an old version of Deluxe Paint, the crosshair pointer with the area-to-magnify box around it was moving across a "Rather tacky" world map, and jumping to magnify mode designated the target. Uh huh.

Hands across the ocean...

Gary J McSweeney of Aspendale, Melbourne, spotted an A1200, late model 1084S, Starblazer joystick and Golden Image mouse in a local paper item about two kids hailing from near Chernobyl staying with a Melbourne family, who'd discovered that alien blasting is a universal language.

Educational applications

Paul Morabito of Cabramatta, NSW, spotted an A4000 on the cover of About Catholic Schools, a no doubt riveting magazine distributed to all students in the appropriate institutions. He sent us the cover, and also mentioned his tender years and deep poverty and need to get his disk back - but we'd lost the disk, so we sent him a spare game we had sitting about, which even if rubbish has a few disks in it. Seemed fair.



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More hot AMIGA news

By Daniel Rutter

Yes, fellow Amiga users, there's more news on Amiga Technologies and their plans for the Amiga. US Amiga dealers attended a meeting on the 21st of July with Amiga Technologies to discuss pricing, distribution and the like, and almost a month later there was a press conference in the UK, covering the same topics as the US meeting and more.

Some statements made at the US meeting were contradicted at the UK one; since the UK meeting was held later and was an official press briefing, we think it carries more weight. I suspect the ideas floated at the US dealer meeting were intended to test the water (which turned out to be pretty cold, for a couple of the proposals!), and the statements at the press conference are the final policies.

How much?

The question on everyone's lips at the US meeting was what the A4000T would end up selling for. There was a huge furore when CEI in the States recently announced that base-spec A4000T's would retail for $US3500, an announcement based on an unofficial Amiga Technologies price (if you believe most commentators) or CEI's own imagination (if you believe Amiga Technologies).

In any case, that stratospheric price has been reduced somewhat, with US-made A4000T's with 6Mb of RAM, a 500Mb or better hard drive and the standard 25MHz 68040 processor expected to retail for less than $US3000 - the figure $US2700 has been mentioned. The price is based on a flat wholesale dealer price from Amiga Technologies, which has not been revealed to the public. The machines have been promised to be available at the start of September.

Less than $3000 is still expensive. Remember, PCs are cheaper in the States than here; even for $US3200 (a plausible price with a decent monitor) you can still get a PC clone with much more impressive paper statistics than the A4000, but Amiga Technologies is obviously not trying to compete with PCs in the States.

Why obviously? Glad you asked. The A4000 will be distributed in the States to dealers that want it, but the A1200 won't. This doesn't mean no 1200s will make it to the USA - there's nothing stopping dealers importing their own 1200s from Europe except the irritation of different voltages - but as far as Amiga Technologies are concerned there's no point trying to push the 1200, or any other Amiga, in the States yet.

If you need any other proof, the ad budget provides it. Amiga Technologies' US advertising budget is a grand total of no dollars, no cents. They're taking out no ads at all.

Before you panic, this does not mean there won't be any ads in Europe. While the UK press conference didn't go into the subject of promotions, we can safely assume that Amiga Technologies is happy, for the time being at least, to sell tons of consumer-level Amigas to the rabid European market through ESCOM's chain stores and other retailers; as far as they're concerned, people in Europe already have and want Amigas, whereas the American market is a few video users, a reasonable number of vocal Amigans scattered

across the country and well over 100 million people who wouldn't take Amigas if they came free with a ballpark hot dog.

If this is true, the Amiga Technologies strategy will certainly maintain the status quo, as nobody's likely to buy an Amiga if they don't know they exist. But many would-be 1200 sellers in the US say there are plenty of people who'd like an AGA Amiga but can't afford a 4000.

According to the US meeting, the "no 1200s for America" deal was to be inverted in Europe, with only 1200s being distributed there. The UK conference contradicted this, though, which suggests a sudden awakening on Amiga Technologies' part to the demand for power Amigas worldwide.

The A1200s are being made near Bordeaux in France by an American company called Solectron, which makes all sorts of high-tech gear including Silicon Graphics workstations. Amiga Technologies say they've picked European manufacturing to avoid any quality problems - it's no secret that in the year or so before Commodore's demise the number of defective Amigas was high.

The UK A1200

The entry level A1200 for the UK, available at the end of September, will have 2Mb of RAM, bundled productivity and games software and no hard drive, and a £399 price tag. For £100 more you'll get a 170Mb hard drive and Scala MM300 multimedia software.

Contradicting the US conference again, John Smith went on to mention an A4000/040 pack with a 1Gb drive and 6Mb of RAM, and a 4000/060 package out sometime during November. All of the new Amiga packages will ship with AmigaDOS 3.1; 1200s will be made in Bordeaux, A4000 boards will be made near Philadelphia and assembled there or, for European 4000s, in the ESCOM plant in Germany.

There's also going to be a new European-made monitor, which will work with all Amiga screenmodes - 15 to 38kHz. Called the M1438S, this appears to be a rebadged Microvitec model.

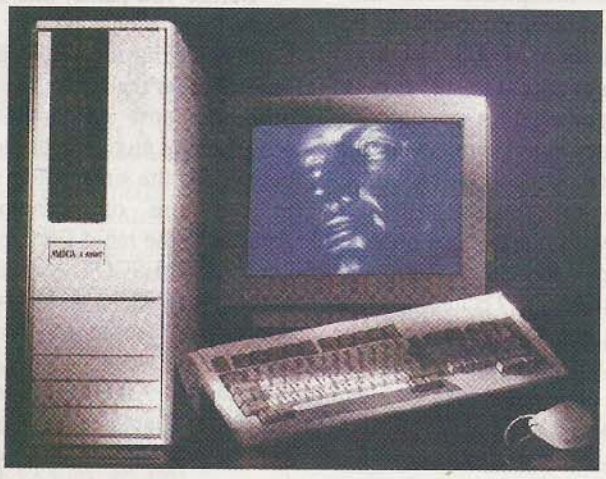
RIP CD32?

Going by the earlier US meeting, the CD32 seemed to be dead and buried, with Amiga Technologies apparently of the opinion that going up against the might of Sony's Playstation and the other recent superpowered consoles - Sega's Saturn, even 3DO - with the CD32 was a bad idea. The CD32 was mentioned only in passing at the UK conference, but it was mentioned that they'd be on show at the upcoming IFA Fair in Berlin, which sounds like a funny way to dump a product.

Right: *The CD32 - dead and buried?*

Even if it's not going to be made any more, this doesn't mean the CD32's completely dead. Developers are still making games for it, with an SX-1 expansion it turns into a funny looking but perfectly functional A1200 plus CD-ROM, and Amiga Technologies' enthusiasm for niche markets and technology licensing means CD32 boards may still be made for use in things like information kiosks, set-top boxes and the like.

If the CD32 is to be scrapped, there's some sense to the decision. The CD32 may be expandable into a proper computer, but it looks like a games console. A pile of cool features are as nothing if you're selling to a market that wants to play games, full stop, not compute and watch MPEG movies. The CD32 also can't match the processing power of the cutting edge



Left: *The "new" A4000 - back to the old cases?*

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Left: *The new I Glasses - Amiga compatible*

dedicated games machines. It can sell cheaper than Saturn and 3DO, but at that price it's not much of a computer, just a console with two year old technology.

We await an official pronouncement on the fate of the CD32 as we know it.

Rhubarb!

We went to all the trouble of presenting you with a load of pictures of "The New Amiga" in the July 1995 magazine, and now it appears that the machines that'll be hitting the streets as you read this will be in pretty much the original cases, at least for this year. And the red four-bars logo Amiga Technologies put all over the boxes has been scrapped (it reportedly looks too much like the Church of Scientology insignia), and replaced with the word Amiga set in the font Bodoni with a red square over the i. We haven't seen any pictures of the "real" A4000T or new A1200 yet, so who knows what we'll end up seeing. And who cares, for that matter? It'll be a bummer if Amigas end up looking like PCs (worst case scenario!), but it's what's on the screen that matters.

Distribution

UK Amiga distribution will be split between chain stores and independent dealers. ESCOM's many stores in the UK (they took over the Rumbelows chain, which used to sell Amigas) and other distributors will be involved.

The UK branch of Amiga Technologies is also responsible for sales to India, Malta, Israel - and Australia. It's not a local distributor, but it's the next best thing.

Petro speaks

Petro Tyschtschenko, the General Manager of Amiga Technologies name, talked about the difficulties encountered in getting the corpse of Commodore up and walking - $US10 million to buy it, and several times as much to get it going again, with long lead times on many parts and tailor made parts more expensive than in the olden days of a year and a half ago.

According to Petro, the first runs of A1200s and A4000Ts will have essentially the same specifications as the old models - maybe bigger drives, maybe different looks, definitely AmigaDOS 3.1 for the A1200, but essentially the same. He said that the A4000T was a new product anyway, since Commodore only made 200 units (does that make de Loreans new cars?), and specifically ruled out any case changes this year.

Interestingly, Tyschtschenko mentioned that while Amiga Technologies already has a dealer network in the US, they're still looking for a partner/distributor to handle business over there.

He didn't make any dramatic statements about future Amigas - faster processors and chip integration (combining presently separate chips, for simpler, smaller, cheaper boards) for the current machines, external CD-ROMs and more built in RAM for A1200s and CD32 boards in set-top boxes were all developments he said Amiga Technologies were working on, but he mentioned no schedules.

The next generation RISC Amiga is still at the pre-drawing-board stage - there's been no decision on which processor to use.

VR glasses!

John Smith, the UK Sales Manager for Amiga Technologies and the guy who compensates for the complexity of Petro Tyschtschenko's name, spoke at the UK press conference and mentioned something rather interesting - virtual reality glasses, called I Glasses.

While not actually an Amiga Technologies product - they're made by Virtual Products, another ESCOM group member - I Glasses will work with Amiga machines. They come in two models. The first, which lacks all the fancy head-tracking gear but can still display 3-D images, will work with anything with a composite video out - A1200s, CD32s, other game consoles, VCRs and so on. They give you what's billed as an appar-

ent two metre screen - what the resolution's like remains to be seen, but it sounds rather cool.

3D films for I Glasses are apparently in the works; Smith mentioned the Who's "Tommy" as an example. The PC version of the I Glasses has surround sound, and head tracking, so you see what you look at, not one fixed view. It's also considerably more expensive, because on top of head tracking it has to use a VGA to composite converter box. No prices have yet been announced for either, though.

Both I Glass models weigh in at about 230 grams; certainly more noticeable than an ordinary pair of specs, but not much to strap to your head. They're touted as being designed with spectacle wearers in mind, which is more than can be said for previous attempts. Both models should be out in the UK during September, with the PC version coming complete with some sample games.

Commodore PCs

The first "Commodore" badged PCs, made by ESCOM, are due to hit the European market shortly. There's nothing very special about these machines; they'll carry the Commodore brand, there will be Commodore branded accessories and peripherals as well, and they're aimed at the bargain-name-brand market.

Further up the market ladder will be the Commodore "Golf" series PCs, better made and with funky cases by Frogdesign, the folk responsible for the case-that-until-recently-looked-likely-to -be-used-for-the-A4000T.

Overall

If the current Amiga Technologies strategies stay, the Amiga market in the USA will wither - and it's none too healthy now. Europe, however, should be a bonanza, with 1200s selling by the truckload thanks to existing support and advertising (none of which we've seen at the time of writing, but have faith). There's still no local distributor for Australia, but with Amiga Technologies UK in charge of getting machines to us at least we know who to talk to now.

Amiga Technologies have a plan. It's not necessarily a great plan, yet, but they have no record of pigheadedness in the face of public outcry - in fact, quite the opposite, if that's how you read the $US3500 A4000 and 1200/4000 comparative distribution changes. They are the Amiga's best, and only, chance, and they seem to be getting their act together.

Stop Press!
Nothing to report!

We were hoping to be able to bring you news of an official Australian Amiga distributor this issue, but unfortunately nobody's been announced. As previously mentioned, Amiga Technologies UK is handling distribution TO Australia, but there's nobody (yet) handling distribution IN this country.

This isn't all that astonishing. In the olden days of CBM, persons from overseas accasionally expressed surprise that Australia rated a whole Commodore branch to iself, rather than just a simple little distribution office. We may have very high computer ownership in Australia, but that doesn't make us a huge market - we're a drop in the bucket compared with Germany.

So it's conceivable that there won't actually be a local Amiga company, per se, just distribution deals with various retailers. This wouldn't be a problem for distribution purposes, but Amiga Technologies would also have to make local advertising deals without a local representative, so some sort of Australian division could still be an idea. Time will tell.

Amigas on show

Amiga Technologies will have a booth at the Internationale Funkausstellung (IFA) in Berlin, one of Germany's biggest TV, communications and multimedia fairs with 500,000 visitors expected. This will be the first official public Amiga showing since the liquidation; 1200s, 4000Ts, CD32s and I Glasses will be on show.

If you want to contact Amiga Technologies UK, responsible for Australian Amiga distribution, you can call on +44 1628 7700 25 (there are two other numbers, the same but ending in 36 and 41), or fax them on +44 1628 7700 22.

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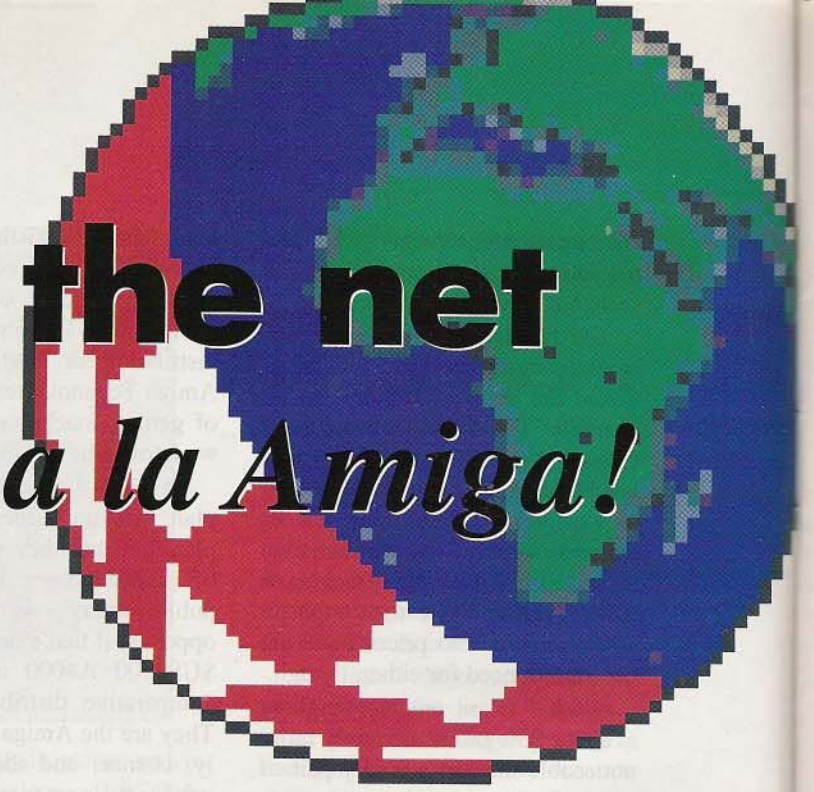
Other news

NewTek, according to Alex Amor of CEI, is going to stop production of the Video Toaster, the core of the professional Amiga market in the USA. The reason? Shortage of parts (eh?); apparently CEI is trying to change NewTek's mind about this.

Part of the reason for NewTek ditching the Toaster could be Centaur Development, the Opalvision people, finally announcing that the long, long, long, long, long awaited Opal Video Roaster chip is completely, totally and utterly ready, though not actually shipping, pending A4000T price announcements. People who sent Opal boards and money to the USA for Roaster installation and got less than they bargained for may now shout "Yeah, right!"

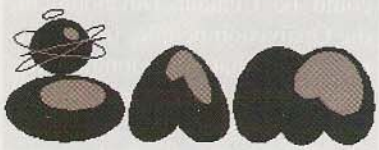
Hey, maybe it's true, and maybe the now-solid price of the A4000 will get it all happening - a superpowered PAL video processor at last, to kick the Amiga into edit suites the world over, not just the States. Who knows.

Surfing the net *a la Amiga!*



By Adrian De Luca

The Internet, a practically infinite resource of information, still continues to defy all predictions of its growth rate, with an estimated 4,851,873 host computers connected to it, compared with only 2,476,641 at the same time last year. Researchers believe the Internet is growing by 24% per quarter. What does all this mean, I hear you ask?



Well, a whole lot more Amiga Web pages to surf through of course - according to these statistics, the number of World Wide Web pages doubles every 57 days!

The Amiga has always enjoyed much support on the Internet - just look at Aminet, the largest Amiga software repository in the world, which now boasts over 10,000 accesses by Amiga users every day.

And since the sale of the Amiga to Escom, WWW pages in support of the Commodore buyout have been popping up everywhere.

These cover all aspects of the takeover and make available all the juicy information - transcripts of press conferences, rumours, pictures and user opinions.

If you've not already guessed, I spend a lot of my free time (and non-free time) surfing the information rollercoaster and searching for the latest and greatest Amiga stopping points available on the net.

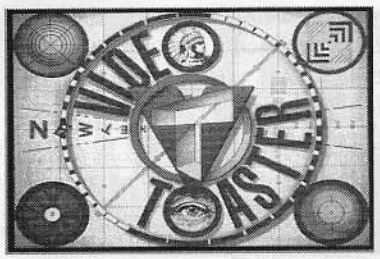
Over the past few weeks, I've compiled a list of WWW sites which every new Amiga Internet surfer should check out.

The Amiga Home Page

http://www.omnipresence.com/amiga.html

The home of the Amiga on the Internet. The Amiga Home Page provides a jumping off point for an abundance of information on our lovable machine.

You can find things like detailed descriptions of the Amiga hardware, a complete history of how the Amiga was born, the lowdown on all the latest software releases, examples of the Amiga at work (SeaQuest, Babylon 5), links to all the greatest software archives, links to plenty of Amiga



supporting companies, Amiga related user groups, newsletters and BBS's all around the world, and more!

Aminet

http://ftp.wustl.edu/~aminet

No Amigoid can go past the greatest Amiga Internet phenomenon ever, Aminet!

Most if not all new Amiga freely distributable software makes its first stop at Aminet, the largest Amiga software repository in the world.

Aminet holds better than three and a half gigabytes of software, and it's very neatly organised into categories so you won't have a hard time finding what you're after.

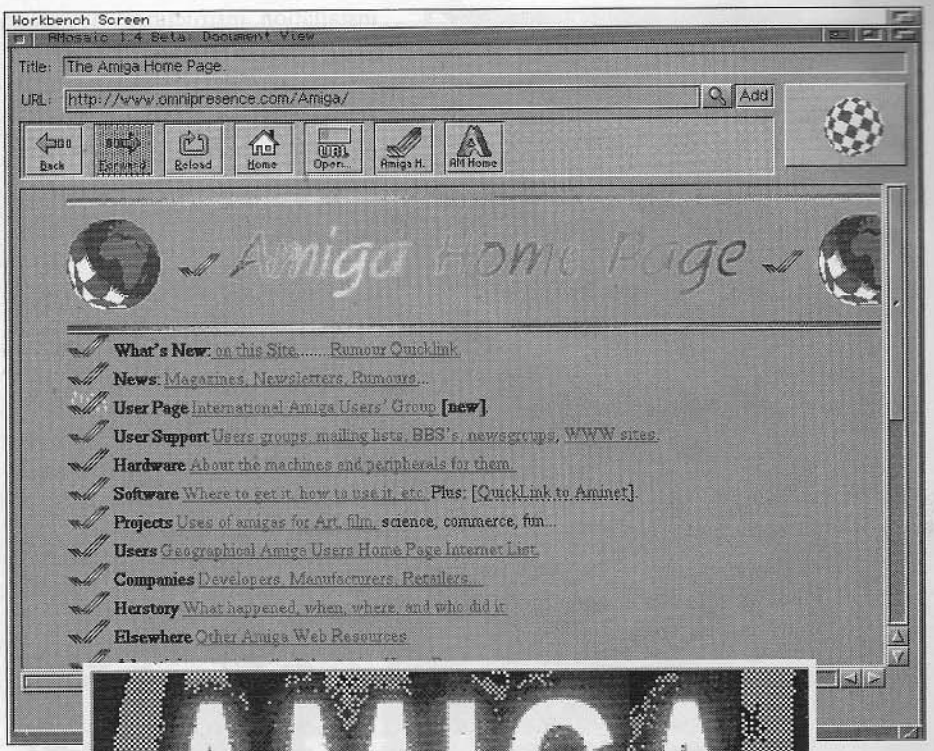
If you get stuck, there's an excellent search facility to query its large database of files. Aminet's RECENT page is updated every week with all the latest uploads, and you can even have your own personal new uploads page that simply tells you what's new since you last looked.

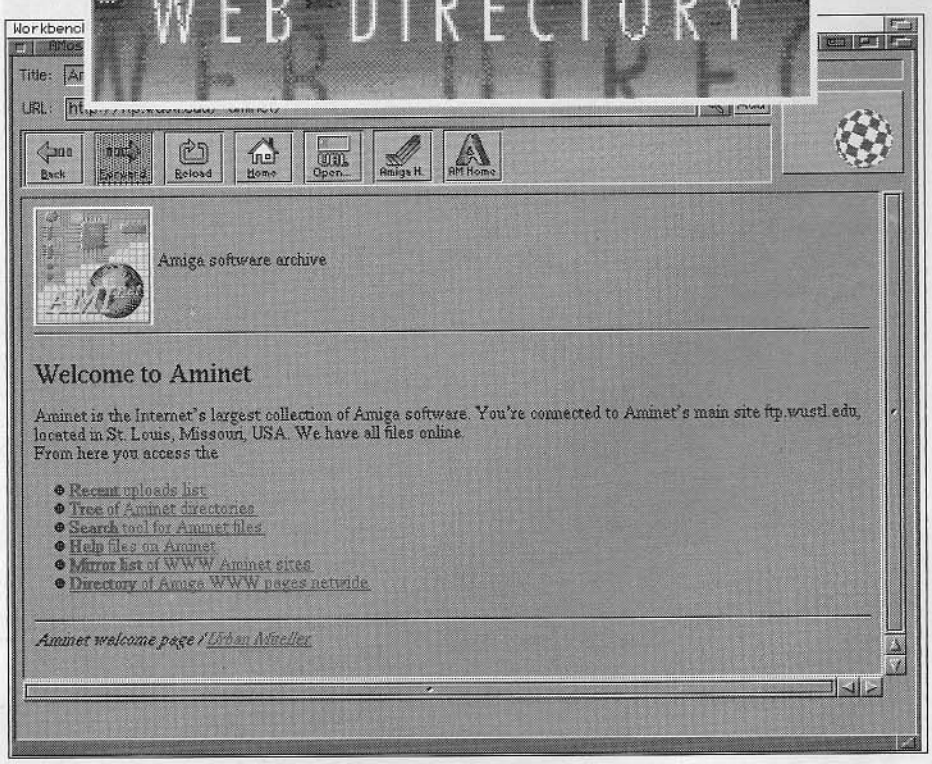
For all the latest in shareware, Aminet is your one stop shop!

The Amiga Web Directory

http://www.prairienet/org/community/clubs/cycug/amiga.html

This is a comprehensive guide to Amiga resources on the Internet and can be directly compared to The Amiga Home Page. It's run by





the Urbana Commodore Users Group in Mexico, and is constantly updated with all the latest ESCOM news and links to all the new Amiga Web sites popping up on the net.

The Amiga Web Directory covers almost every aspect of the Amiga - online magazines, ESCOM press conference transcripts, retailers and developers, frequently asked questions (FAQs), latest hardware reviews, links to major software archives, Amiga newsgroups, telnet to Internet bulletin boards and links to the more exotic Amiga Web pages on the net.

If you ever need to find anything about hardware, software, retailers or developers, this site will point you in the right direction.

Amiga Mosaic

http://www.omnipresence.com/amosaic/2.0/

Amiga Mosaic, the one and only World Wide Web browser available for the Amiga, has an amazing site filled with everything you need to know about the software, from general discussion groups through to snazzy screenshots.

Amiga Mosaic is currently in version 2.0, Beta 1, and has been dramatically upgraded from previous releases.

It now boasts a much easier to use interface, support for forms, background masking and an improved hotlist; it's a more robust and reliable program all round. I have used 2.0 for these reviews, and found it to be much more stable than previous releases.

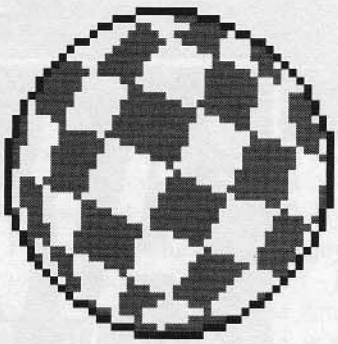
I believe it could now finally begin to compete with the PC's NetScape!

This page contains complete installation instructions, access to the software archive, access to copies of the AMosaic Digest Newsletter, full details to join the mailing lists, a list of developers and comprehensive FAQs.

NEWTek

http://www.newtek.com

Newtek have a Web site too, supporting their Video Toaster video boards and their ever popular raytracing software, LightWave. There's example images, update and third party software and complete US price lists.



Scala

http://www/scala.com/scala/Welcome.html

For all you multimedia buffs, SCALA have only recently set up a WWW Home Page providing lots of information on their popular products.

SCALA have a whole heap of data on their Multimedia, InfoChannel and Interactive TV software lines. The page also contains news, press releases, and a thorough and probably not interesting corporate background.

Although this page is not as spectacular as I would have thought, I'll be curious to see what SCALA come up with in the following months.

If you're after a peek at the latest multimedia software, or are thinking of upgrading your existing package, pay SCALA's home page a visit.

Amiga Report Online Magazine

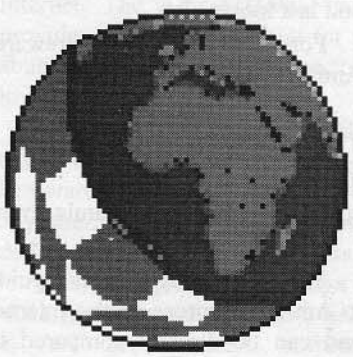
http://ramiga.cts.com:80/amigareport/

Over the last couple of months there's been an explosion of electronic Amiga magazines floating around on the net for techies, hard core gamers, CD32 users and ordinary users, but none is more successful than Amiga Report.

Amiga Report has been providing up-to-the-minute information on the Commodore buyout process, with transcripts of everything that was said at the Commodore auction and the ESCOM press conferences. Now that the saga is over, Amiga Report continues to provide the latest news to the Amiga community.

Amiga Report is put together by a very serious bunch of young journalists from the U.S. and Canada, and it contains hardware and software reviews, FTP announcements, latest ESCOM news and occasionally the transcripts of any special IRC conferences held on #amiga channel.

The page contains all the back issues, and details on how you can get onto the Amiga Report mailing



list and have the magazine sent to you automatically.

Amiga Mailing Lists

http://www.iam.com/amiga/lists.html

If you really want to keep tabs on all the latest information on new products or services and can't be bothered searching for the info yourself, then subscribe to mailing lists and let the information come to you!

This site contains details of mailing lists of some popular hardware and software products and services like Aminet, Parnet, Imagine, Linux, AmiTCP, Blitz Basic, AMOS, PGP and heaps more!

The author of this site also provides some precautionary tips on mailing lists for beginners. Unfortunately, you can't automatically subscribe to the mailing lists, but there are all the necessary details on how to do it.

Catch all my favourite Amiga sites on my own Amiga Home Page:

http://yallara.cs.rmit.edu.au/~s9407327/AmigaPage.html

Happy webbing!

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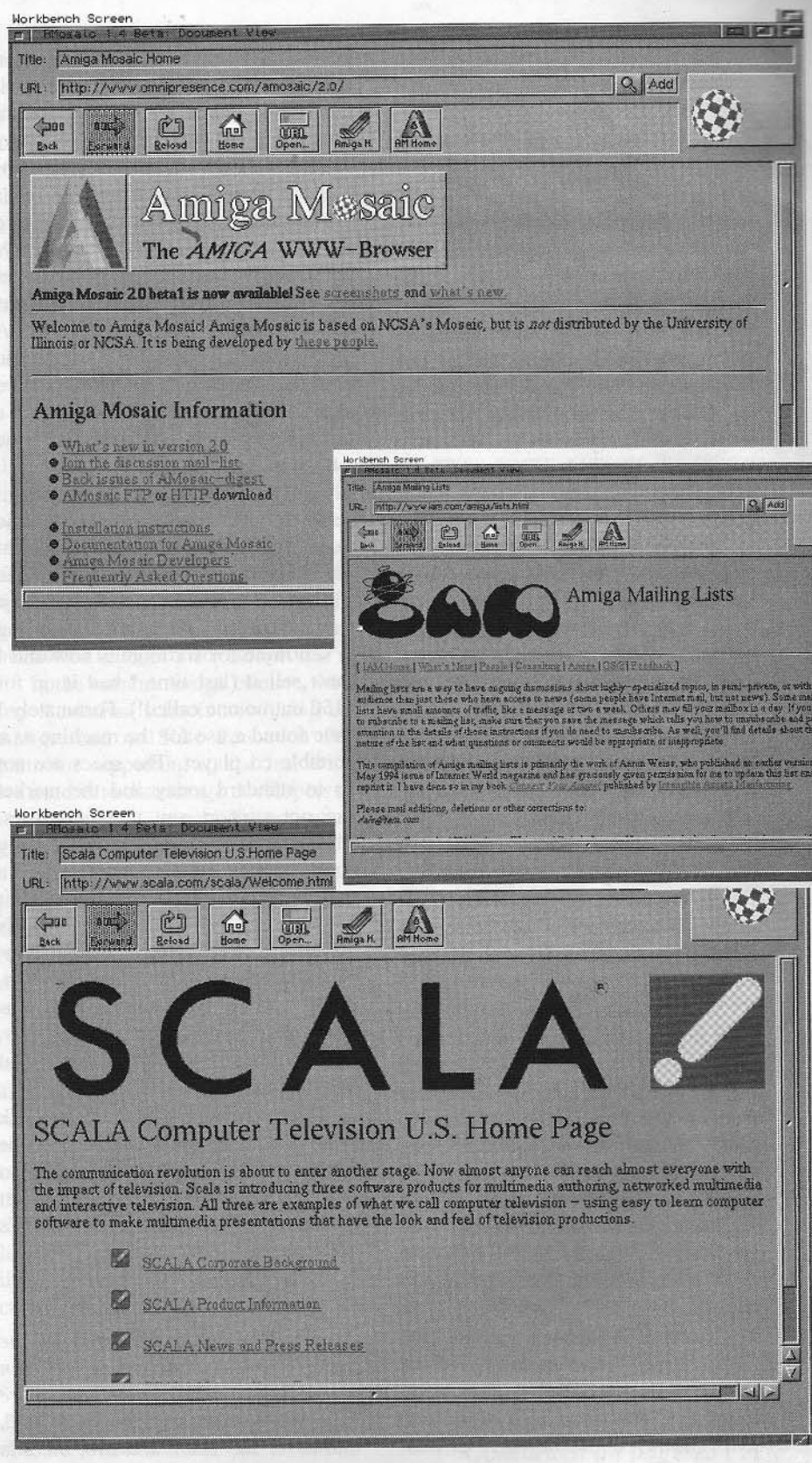


to the editor

Soapbox time

I am writing regarding the future of Amigas in this country and the rest of the world. While it's comforting to see a buyer after all this time, the platform is still very unstable. You will not see the computer in any department store or even any major computer store.

If the A1200 is to survive, it must have the following as minimum spec: MC68LC030/28 or 33 MHz, 4Mb RAM, 420 Mb HDD, 3.5" HD FDD at the same price as before, since the market is quite different now. ESCOM must learn to utilise the market forces of the IBM by using 3.5" HDDs (remember, 420 and 540 Mb HDD are cheaper to make than 200 or even 250Mb, since the 540 etc. are made in much larger quantities.) The A1200 should be designed to take on 3.5" HDDs (it only needs a small modification). Today, you can get yourself a high powered IBM for less than $2000.

What annoys me is people who keep saying that 2Mb is enough and a 100Mb HDD is enough. Remember, the Amiga is a graphics computer from the word go. It therefore requires more memory to accommodate the various graphic screens available. Just because the OS is efficient, this does not mean that we should, therefore, be left with half the RAM and one fifth the hard drive space of our IBM counterparts.

Running Workbench on 1 or 2Mb RAM is like trying to run Windows on 2 or 4Mb. It works, but it is not fully utilising the capabilities of the system. The A1200 should have at least the LC version of the 030 so we can use virtual memory (which is a good thing since when you need the extra ram, you don't have to go out and buy more. These situations are not common but it is for convenience).

My suggestion is to stop fighting the IBM market and co-operate by trying to use as much as possible. Prices for Amiga peripherals are ridiculous in Australia.

Remember, this is 1995 and by the time the Amiga gets going, Windows 95 will be moving the PC forward at a much faster pace than before and the Amiga will really be struggling.

Finally, the decision by Escom to scrap the CD32 makes good economic sense since the console market is being choked with new consoles. If the CD32 had been supported earlier, it may have been saved. I've been trying to sell mine for six months now and I can't sell it (last time I had it up for $150 but no one called!). Fortunately I have found a use for the machine as a portable cd player. The specs are not up to standard today and the market can not support any more consoles. This is a pity, since it was the only console to be fully expandable into a real computer with small cost. Other consoles can not do this (the CD32 is the only console to be able to be connected to the Internet, word process, do 3D rendering, databases, programming, etc.). I could go one for ever, but I think most people know what I'm talking about.

If you are unsure of the above, ask yourself this question: Why has the Amiga failed in Australia, and what will stop it from being a major market contender? (apart from Commodore's collapse).

Darrin Hawkes, via Internet

Ed: Running a 68LC030 in the A1200 is an absolutely excellent plan with only two minor flaws. One, there is no such processor as an LC030, and never has been, and two, there is no such processor as an LC030, and never has been. I know that strictly speaking that's only one flaw, but I thought it was such a biggie that it merited mentioning twice.

You're no doubt thinking of the LC040, which is a full 040 sans co-processor but with MMU. The only 030 variants are the full version with MMU, which is probably what you meant, and the 68EC030, without the MMU. Amiga Technologies have specifically referred to faster processors in older machines as a near-future plan, so it seems likely.

Your views on the Amiga's niche make sense, but Amiga Technologies seem not to be taking the bargain price tack, yet. It's cost ESCOM a bundle to get Amigas into production again, parts cost more than they did two years ago and and Amiga Technologies are obviously loath to use the first run of Amigas as loss leaders. They're pricing Amigas for profit, which means they're above what they cost when Commodore went down and don't have the same edge on bargain basement PCs. But the European market will buy them anyway, and it's quite reasonable to expect significant price drops when production ramps up and the wheels get oiled again.

I can't help but say that far and away the most prominent reason for any Amiga "failure" in Australia (by what definition?) is the collapse of Commodore. Let's face it, it's not much of a spiel - "Come and buy this cool computer that nobody's making and a company went broke selling! No, really, I know how it sounds..."

Thank goodness THOSE days are over!

Controversy, controversy!

As a person who has been involved in the promotion of the Amiga in education since the Amiga first arrived in Australia, first as a dealer and lately as a consultant, I have been increasingly disturbed by the tenor of

some of your reviews of education product over the past few months. I refer in particular to the Lascelles educational software review (Tom Williams) in the Educate column of the April 1995 Amiga Review, and The Australian Graphic Encyclopedia review (Daniel Rutter) in the June 1995 issue, and the letter reply to HC Software the month after.

My personal experience with all Lascelles education software (including the four titles reviewed which, incidentally, are not "new"; hence some will not work on Workbench 2 or higher) and with HC Software's The Australian Graphic Atlas (and its CD32 version, The Australian Graphic Encyclopedia), puts me at odds with both these reviewers.

Kids love these products, and so do the teachers. Why? Because, unlike so much so-called "education software" that has been written for the Amiga, it is written for the Australian education system. For anyone with a CD32 (or CDTV), I highly recommend The Australian Graphic Encyclopedia. At last we have a geographic resource for the Amiga that was previously only available for the Macintosh and PC. And for anyone with preschool and primary school children, I really do recommend Lascelles' educational software. It was good value when it was selling for around $50 to $80, and it is even better value at the prices quoted in your review.

The thing that really concerned me, however, was the impression Tom Williams gave in his conclusion; that commercial products are unnecessary if PD or Shareware software is available. How wrong he is. Sure, it's great to have educational PD material, but so much of it is unsuitable for Australia. If the Amiga's position is to be sustained here in the education area, teachers want software that is suitable for Australian schools, and they want to know that they are dealing with someone who has an ongoing commitment to the software they are being asked to buy. In other words, they want local publishers - people like Rush, Lascelles and HC Software.

The Amiga needs all the help it can get in its bid to regain market share, especially in education. In view of this, may I suggest that, if your reviewers - for whatever reason - decide not to give any product a favourable review, it would be kinder to the Amiga, to the Amiga community, and ultimately, to Amiga Review, not to review that product.

And while I have no quarrel with your reply to Paul Johnson, namely that: "We at Amiga Review do not believe in being unusually kind to software because it was written in Australia ...", I do feel that here is a situation where we have cause to apply the apostle Paul's words at 1 Corinthians 6:12 - "All things are lawful for me; but not all things are advantageous."

In the current Amiga climate, with few Australian schools now using the Amiga, and no State Education Department supporting it, the last thing we need is to discourage developers of Amiga product, especially education product.

If HC Software, and other local publishers, had the resources of Bill Gates, or even the backing of the NSW Board of Studies (as Apple does), perhaps they could produce something fancier, and more to the liking of Tom Williams or Daniel Rutter. But let us be thankful that there are still people like Paul Johnson, who are prepared to publish educational software for the Amiga. Because those committed to selling Amigas, rather than magazines, realise only too well that, without commercial publishers like HC Software, Lascelles and Rush, there would be no Amiga in the education market.

Basil Flinter, Armidale NSW

Ed: To address your points in order: Just because software is old doesn't mean it's OK for it not to work on later versions of the operating system. In the majority of cases, software written to Commodore spec which worked with Workbench 1.3 still works today with 3.1. Antiquity is no excuse.

With regard to ongoing commitments to software, we await with interest any new productions from Lascelles (who have apparently not released anything since Workbench 1.3 was the state of the art - we're ready to be corrected on this point), and an update to the Australian Graphic Encyclopedia which corrects the many errors, removes the ridiculous loading delays and adds sufficient hypertext links to make the package easier to use than a book.

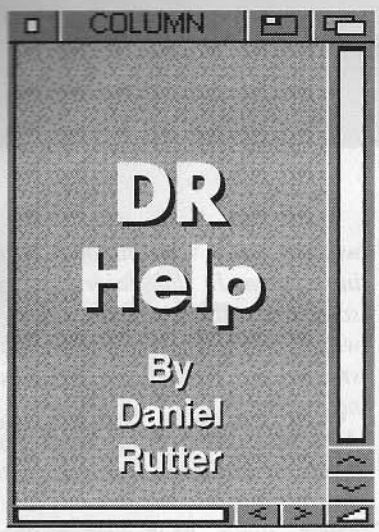
Also, we take exception to your opinion that Amiga Review shouldn't run uncomplimentary reviews of products. Our job is not just promoting Amigas, full stop. We like the machines. We use them. This does not mean we should hush up everything wrong with them and their software.

If we have two reviews to run in the magazine and only room for one, we'll generally run the review of the better product, and hold over the other review for the next magazine. But if there's no such pressure, and there seldom is, we feel the public have a right to know what's bad as well as what's good. We try, as much as we can, to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, and keeping mum about dud software is not telling the whole truth.

We do not believe that Tom Williams meant to imply "that commercial products are unnecessary if PD or Shareware software is available" when he said "I was very disappointed with this range of educational software.

The quality of the software is not much better than most of the PD education software around."

Continued on page 73 . . .



Opal hassles

I recently bought a second hand OpalVision board and already have one BIG problem. I have an A2000, 6.3 motherboard, A2091 with 2Mb, GVP SCSI controller with 4Mb and Workbench 2.

The board is causing random gurus at different parts of the start-up, saying that different commands and partitions have failed, or just freezing the screen with a tearing effect on the top half. When the board is out everything works fine.

The manual says to consult a technician; I have contacted some and they said "it needs 2Mb of chip RAM" or "Check your motherboard for any dry joints." The manual says the Opal board will run on 1Mb chip RAM - what can I do to get it working correctly?

I've been told that the 3.1 ROM chip eliminates the 1Mb chip barrier and uses all the memory as one, and also improves compatibility with graphic boards. Is this true?

I also have a high density drive that doesn't quite work. When inserting a disk, it takes a long time to recognise it, and it can't initialise a disk when I try to format it. Is this something to do with the DOSDrivers? I know a few other people with the same problem.

Ms S Muhling, Mackay, Qld

Dr Help: Ah, I know these symptoms well. Bizarre failures, nonsense errors; yup, there's something broken there. I can make this very machine I'm typing on do it by blocking its ventilation for a few hours, as I discovered the other day.

Try the Opal board in another machine, if you can; if it works, then indeed your machine does have a problem - although expansion bus problems could be expected to mess up the other two cards as well. If, as I suspect, it screws up in other machines too, get it fixed - and not by the guy who said, incorrectly, that it needs 2Mb of chip RAM to work!

Try Unitech Electronics on (02) 820 3555 or Sibnet on (02) 417 7600, if as I also suspect nobody up North wants to touch it.

The 3.1 ROM and Workbench indeed work better with graphic boards, but they do not unify your RAM into one lump. You still have chip and fast, and never the twain shall meet. For more on Workbench 3.1, check out the articles in the July and February 1995 Amiga Reviews.

If your HD drive misbehaves, make sure you're running the patch program that should have been provided with it; Workbench 2 almost handles HD drives properly, but not quite. If you're running the patch program, congratulations! You've got another broken piece of hardware!

A590 hiccups

I am the proud owner of an Amiga 500 expanded to 1Mb RAM. I bought the machine new in 1987-88.

Recently I purchased a reconditioned A590 hard drive, pre-installed with Workbench 1.3. I have copied to the hard drive a number of programs - Kindwords, Textcraft and a number of games.

These programs will not load cleanly from the hard drive by double clicking their icon. I always get the requester "Insert volume xxx in any drive"; when I cancel the requester, the program continues to load. This also happens when I try to print.

Further, I can't load a file from its icon without read/write error messages across the top of the window and the code No.218 appearing; I then have to reboot. I can, however, load the files from within their creating program.

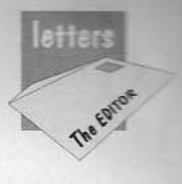
Have I incorrectly installed the programs onto the hard drive?

Michael Lee,
South Penrith NSW

Dr Help: It sounds as if you HAVE incorrectly installed the programs, but that doesn't account for all your problems. Annoying requesters for disks that don't exist indicate something's got a default path set to the original disk. Check the Information for the icons you run, and hunt about for anything else set up with a reference to its original disk. Replace these references with pointers to your hard drive. For example, if something's looking for Diskname:L/foobar-handler, change it to l:foobar-handler.

Your strange read-write and hanging problems, though, suggest to me that there's a problem with the hard drive - some basic Workbench component's sitting on top of a disk error, perhaps. If you're using a stock A590 with the original 20Mb XT-IDE drive in it, it wouldn't surprise me at all if it'd developed a few nasty glitches over the years - though this particular manifestation's weird!

Try the A590 on a different A500; I suspect it'll do the same thing. A replacement 50Mb SCSI drive in good nick, plus a bit of labour to shift all your data over, should come in at maybe $150, tops, from a dealer. Faster, bigger, fewer errors - it's what I'd do.



IDE or SCSI?

I recently bought an A1200/40 and I want to get a decent hard disk for it. I was wondering if you could clear some things up for me.

Which is the best way to go - IDE or SCSI? I've looked through my back issues and cannot find any articles comparing the two. Maybe it would be worth doing one? IDE seems more expensive and from what I've heard it is slower. Is this really the case? For instance, a 720Mb Fast SCSI-2 drive and a Squirrel SCSI interface cost about $650 together. For the same price you get a 500Mb IDE. And then you have to get it fitted.

My question is, when it says $499 for a 720Mb SCSI drive, is that all you have to pay or are there more costs involved? I.e. does it come in a box? Are there any other cables or software I would need to get?

Also, with IDE you can only connect two devices, whereas with the Squirrel you can have up to seven devices hanging off your machine.

Lastly, can you tell me the difference between SCSI, SCSI-2 and Fast SCSI-2? I suspect that Fast SCSI-2 is the best because it's got Fast in front of it - is this the case? Are there any compatibility problems with any of this gear and the A1200?

Keep up the good work. You produce an excellent mag.

P.S. I'd like to say hi to my nephew in Perth, and that I will hopefully be seeing him on the net soon.

Greg Hurst, Mission Beach Qld

Dr Help: IDE (Integrated Drive Electronics), as you no doubt know, is the control standard used by the little 40Mb drive already in your A1200. It's an interface hugely popular in the PC world, because almost all of the thinking's done by the drives - an IDE "controller" on a PC is barely more than a signal router from the motherboard.

A1200 and A4000 IDE controllers, however, have rather more to them because they make IDE devices look like SCSI (Small Computer Systems Interface) ones to the computer - as you may have noticed, as far as your 1200's concerned its hard drive is controlled by scsi.device.

All things being equal, IDE drives are cheaper than SCSI. It hasn't been a big difference for a while now and with plummeting prices of big hard drives it gets to be pretty much irrelevant, but they're still cheaper overall. The reason why you've seen IDE drives as more expensive is that you've probably been looking at prices for 3.5 inch SCSI drives (the most common format) and 2.5 inch IDEs (the size the 1200, 600 and various non-Amiga portables use). 2.5 inch devices are more expensive because they're more miniaturised.

Now, you can fit a 3.5 inch device into a 1200 - it takes some shoehorning but it can be done. Or you can clumsily sit your big clunky cheap IDE drive outside the 1200 with a ribbon cable feeding back into the case; this is not recommended by Vogue Living but it gives you more storage for less bucks. Or you can go SCSI. Again, all things being equal SCSI is indeed faster than IDE, but whenever you start talking about speed in the computer world you end up qualifying statements like this out of existence.

For example, if you use a Squirrel it doesn't matter if you use the SCSI drive Commander Data backs up his dreams on - it'll still be none too quick, because the Squirrel's a not particularly inspired SCSI-1 controller. Sure, it plugs into the PCMCIA port and you can hot connect and disconnect it, but from the SCSI side it's not too exciting. A fast IDE drive on the internal controller will keep up with it, give or take a bit.

When you buy a big SCSI drive for $500, or whatever, what you get is a drive, full stop. No cables, no box, no set of steak knives. Ditto IDEs, by the way; if no extras are listed, assume no extras.

The reason for this is simple - most people don't need boxes and cables. If you're putting the drive inside your big-box Amiga or PC, you slide it into a bay, connect a power lead from the power supply that's already there and a data cable that's probably already there too and away you go. This is the case for putting a new 2.5 incher into a 1200 - unplug the old, plug in the new, boot from floppy and set it up. It's more complex if you're putting a second 2.5 inch drive into a 1200, but not a huge deal more.

For external use, which is what you'll have to do if you get a big SCSI drive, you'll need a few extras. The external box, with a power supply of its own (you could splice into your 1200 supply but it's not very muscular), will probably set you back around $150 - try haggling when you get the drive. Mounting the drive in the box is not rocket science, but the dealer will do it for you if you like.

You may also need a data cable or adaptor, if the connector on the end of the Squirrel (25 pin D style, as I recall) and the connector on the back of the box (commonly 50 pin Centronics or even the new little 50 way Amphenols) don't match. If you get an internal SCSI controller for your 1200 instead of the Squirrel, you'll need a 25 pin D to whatever's-on-the-box cable. Expect a cable to cost, say, $30, and you may be pleasantly surprised. If you're handy with a screwdriver and a soldering iron you can make your own external

box, or if you're planning to add lots of devices you can just buy a PC minitower case with power supply for less than $200 - that'll have room for a slab of drives and more than enough power, as one of my friends can testify (hi Mark!).

You're quite right that you can plug more devices into SCSI than IDE - and IDE is known for its temperamental insistence that some models of drive not be used together. This problem doesn't pop up nearly as often as it used to, and Amiga dealers should all know by now what not to sell.

SCSI, or SCSI-1, is the original version. SCSI-2 adds extra features but is, for your purposes, essentially the same. Fast SCSI-2 only does anything if you've got a compatible controller, and then you start getting into Fast Wide SCSI-2 and differential mode and 101 other things you're never going to do. Trust me.

SCSI-1 devices work with SCSI-2 controllers, and vice versa. Don't worry about your Squirrel, or whatever, only being SCSI-1. All it means is that if you get a hairy chested superfast Bruce Wayne Industries drive, it'll be running not nearly as fast as it could from your machine. I've got a DEC drive at home in that very situation. Don't let it bother you.

A500 questions

I have a problem that I hope you can help me with. My system comprises an A500 with 1/2 chip RAM, 1/2 fast RAM and KS 2.04 ROM, a 1084S monitor, A1011 external drive and a Star NX1000c printer. My problem is this: Suddenly, in the middle of doing something, the monitor display will go a shade darker as if the contrast has been turned down. This is usually followed a few seconds later by a flurry of very noisy disk activity, always in the external drive and sometimes in the internal drive, which goes on for up to a minute, but usually only seconds. It does this regardless of whether a disk is present in the drive or not.

Sometimes the disk drive activity light is lit and sometimes not, also the power light sometimes dims. Then things return to normal. This may occur a few times in a hour, or it may be days between occurrences. Any software running at the time is totally oblivious to this and carries on unaffected, but if a disk is being written on, or read from, it is usually wrecked - i.e. unread/writable. What is causing this, and how can I fix it? Could it be a CIA chip problem?

Also, on a dark display, my monitor shows a series of fine grey, nearly horizontal lines across the screen. No external adjustment knobs could remove them, and I couldn't find any internal adjusters (pots or the like) which looked likely - a solder joint perhaps?

Finally, what version of "Workbench" should I get to go with my 2.04 ROMs? I only have 1.3, and couldn't get a complete upgrade kit, just the chips.

Lincoln Thompson, Domeville NZ

Dr Help: Oh, great. Bizarre symptoms not obviously traceable to any given component, and it's intermittent, too! It could be the power supply, it could be a dodgily socketed chip, it could be aliens trying to communicate. It could, also, be the CIAs. Open the machine (if you can't do that unaided, don't even think about trying this stuff, and all usual not-my-fault disclaimers apply), push down all the chips after grounding yourself on the disk drive casing, and use the computer for a while with the lid off and plenty of air circulation. If the problem vanishes, it's thermal or a loose chip; put the lid back on and continue computing to narrow it down. If the problem stays - and it probably will - locate the CIAs, note their orientation (notch at one end), take them out and put them in each other's sockets, making sure they go in the right way round. Now, if a CIA's toast, the symptoms should change. You'll still have a nutty Amiga, but it'll be a different colour of crazy. If this happens, buy yourself a new CIA for $40 odd mail order and swap it for each of the existing ones in turn, to find which one's dead. If you're really lucky, both will be.

If it's not the CIAs, though, pack the machine off to a serviceperson. Good luck finding one over the Tasman.

If the monitor problem bothers you, any computer repair joint should be able to fix it. If it's a 1084 clone type, a clever TV repairman will do. Do NOT muck about with your monitor yourself, for two reasons.

One, there's 40 kilovolts on the back of that tube, it can hang about longer than you'd think, and pine boxes are very unflattering to one's figure, if you catch my drift.

Two, uninformed trimmer-twiddling is the number one cause of irritated Real Servicemen and huge repair bills, as the Guy Who Knows What He's Doing tries to figure out what the Guy Who Thought He Could Do It actually did. On this note, allow me to mention that if anyone out there simply HAS to wade into electronic servicing with no particular qualifications, check out the September Electronics Australia, which has an excellent article on the subject with much wise advice.

Workbench 2.1 will work with your v37.175 ROMs. You can use anything back to v2.04 just fine, but 2.1 comes with the cool CrossDOS stuff so it's worth getting. You could have some trouble finding the disks legally, though, as you're no doubt discovering.

The Amiga learns another language

By Daniel Rutter

You've probably heard of CrossDOS, the AmigaDOS extension that lets you read and write PC format floppy disks. A cutdown version of CrossDOS comes with all AmigaDOS versions from 2.1 up, and so most people have it already.

CrossMAC is the same thing, for Macintosh format disks. But, I hear you ask, why bother? Macs can read DOS disks, so why bother making your disks native Mac format? Who cares?

Well, there are a number of good reasons. To start with a mundane but significant one, Mac files can have up to 31 characters in their name, against the hardwired 8.3 MS-DOS limit. Restricted filenames cause much pain among people who have to tolerate trimmed filenames and nonsense suffixes when moving files around. If you're moving a load of long-named data files to a Mac for use with a pre-rolled script that works on the Amiga and Mac versions of Program X, it's much nicer to be able to use the script straight without changing all the listed names.

More importantly, CrossMAC lets you use Mac formatted removable media, which covers a lot more than floppies. If you want to move a SyQuest-load of data from your Amiga to a Mac, getting it on the right format to start with is a big help. Sure, you can use a PC SyQuest on the Amiga and also on the Mac, but since Mac users upon occasion live up to the stereotype of not being able to find their gluteus maximi with both manipulatory appendages, it doesn't hurt to use the native lingo.

The CrossMAC manual warns that there are strange and subtle formatting options involved in Mac removable media and the bet strategy is to have the cartridge formatted on the Mac the data's going to, but in the one test I did I formatted a cart on the Amiga and it worked fine.

CrossMAC also lets you access Mac Hierarchical File System (HFS) formatted CD-ROM discs, but this is not a big selling point since all decent CD-ROM filesystems, such as the excellent AsimCDFS, also handle HFS CDs.

Like CrossDOS, CrossMAC doesn't let you run Mac programs, translate files into Amiga-comprehensible form or do anything else emulator-ish. It just lets you read and write the disks. But it does that very well.

Setting up

Installing CrossMAC is a highly automated procedure, although it pays to keep your eye on the installer, whose default options can give you rather more Mac drives than you want. It's all standard AmigaDOS stuff, though, so you can fix problems easily later if you have to.

Zzzzz...

As is traditional for non-native floppy and hard disk formats on Amigas not running hardware emulators, hard and floppy disk access is not speedy. Amiga floppy drives are none too fast to start with, since even the HD models don't move data any faster than the 1985 originals, but making them work with Mac or MS-DOS filesystems slows things down still more.

If you want to format a high density Mac disk, be ready to put aside the thick end of six minutes

(about half the speed of formatting an Amiga HD disk, and marginally slower even than formatting PC disks). I have no idea how long the thing took to format a 44Mb SyQuest, but twice the normal time seems about right.

If you want to deal with standard Mac 800K disks, with their highly entertaining variable-speed Superdrive format, you'll need a Mac drive and the old Amax cartridge or a regular Amiga double density drive and an Amax II+ or Amax IV card. Fortunately, Apple came to their senses when they set down the high density Mac disk format, and so if you've got a high density drive on your Amiga you can deal with 1440K Mac floppies.

Mac-DOS 101

The Mac operating system is an excellent example of the swan principle - apparent grace and serenity, frantic activity below the surface. Using CrossMAC you get to see some of the extra gubbins that makes Macs work as they do.

For a start, Mac files aren't one entity, like Amiga or MS-DOS files. A Mac file has a data "fork", which contains the actual file information, and a resource fork, which looks to us like a separate file and behaves like our .info files, only more so - it contains icon info, path to the application to use with the file, customisation info for the application and piles of other stuff. This is quite cool; it means Mac users taking a file from their machine to someone else's will find the other machine's quite separate version of the application automatically set up like their one at home. Cool, but complex.

On top of this, there's a separate piece of data buried in the filesystem for every file that contains the "finder" information, which holds four character codes for file type and creating program and, naturally, tons of other stuff.

Fortunately, CrossMAC makes all this stuff easy to deal with, if you have to. Resource forks, invisible to Mac users, can be shown as files with .rs suffixes, and the Resource Extractor program lets you view or extract data from them.

Finder information can be manipulated with the Finder Manager program, which lets you easily set the type and creator for files. This is important, because Mac files without a type won't appear in file requesters. Files that originate on a Mac will have their Finder info ready-set, but if you make a file on the Amiga it won't - necessarily.

This section of CrossMAC's been well thought out too, because you don't have to run Finder Manager for every file you create to make it visible to Mac applications. If you use the right suffix when you put a file onto a Mac disk - .txt for text, .tif for TIFF and so on - CrossMAC can set the Finder info without you doing a thing. And, naturally, you can add more file types to the database.

As if this wasn't enough, there's MacBinary as well. MacBinary is a semi-archived format that combines the data and resource forks, plus the Finder data, into a single file for transfer. CrossMAC detects MacBinary files and automatically splits them up when they're written to a CrossMAC disk, and recombines them again when the file's read.

Other utilities

There's a Mac file salvage program included, too, which overcomes one problem with using alternative filesystems - none of your disk repair utilities work. This program can't actually fix corrupt Mac disks, but it will let you salvage files from them to elsewhere, which is good enough.

There's also a simple switchable automatic text translator, which deals with international characters in text files that differ between platforms, and a basic hex viewer for checking out file contents, which is invoked by default when you double click a file on a Mac disk.

Grind, grind...

The only problem you're likely to strike when using CrossMAC is frantic drive flogging on disk insertion. If you're running CrossDOS and CrossMAC on top of AmigaDOS's standard floppy handling, the three filesystems will beat fresh disks senseless trying to figure out who owns them. There are two possible solutions to this problem. The simplest is to just keep CrossMAC, and even CrossDOS, turned off until you need them. The DOSDriver icons are easy to keep handy somewhere they're not going to be executed by default, and a double click will give you the new filesystem.

Alternately, check out MultiFileSystem, in the public domain (and, by the way, on my HotPD 24 companion disk set, $9.50 the pair from Prime Artifax on 1800 252 879, ring now!). This nifty program bundles all of the filesystems for a given device together and reduces mutual trampling. It's not perfect, but it's a heck of an improvement.

Go buy it!

The slim CrossMAC manual is excellent, giving everyone from rank beginners to the technocurious all they need to know in 58 pages. I dare say even a Mac user could understand it. Overall, this is a well thought out, efficiently constructed package that fills a need and fills it well. If you transfer files to and from Macs, CrossMAC will make your life much easier.

Contact Desktop Utilities on (06) 239 6658 for more information.

❑

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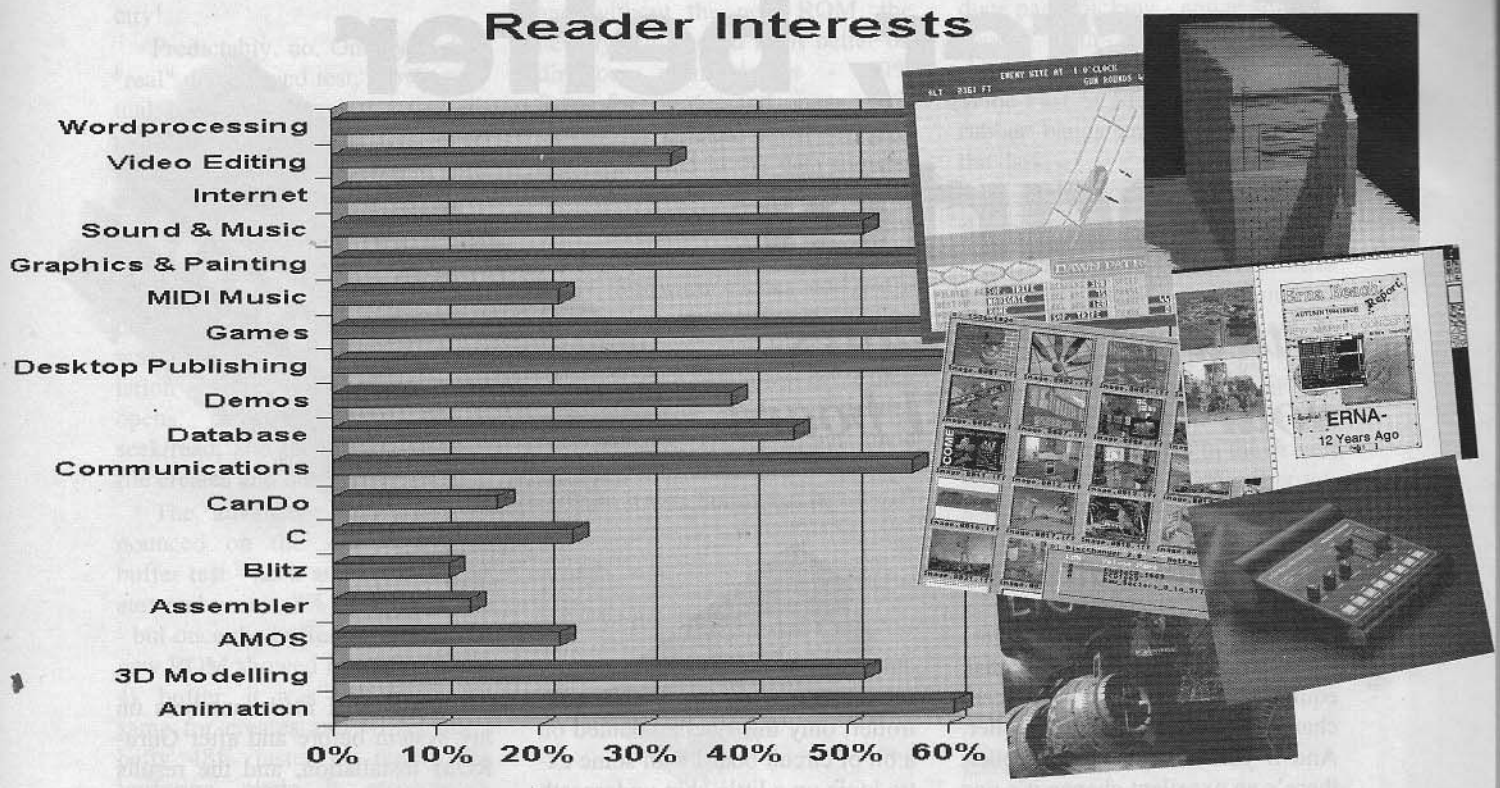

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Faster, better smarter

Guru-ROM updates your GVP SCSI board

By Daniel Rutter

If you've got a hard disk equipped Amiga, there's a decent chance it uses a GVP controller. And if you use a GVP controller, there's an excellent chance it's one of their Series II models - the A2000HC+8, A4008, A2000HC, A500HD Series II, A530 Turbo, Combo 030, G-Force 030 and 040, even the Fang A1200 SCSI card (though not the A1291).

Well, folks, if you're a member of this not-so-exclusive group, you now have the opportunity to make your hard disk considerably faster for $140.

The gadget in question is called the Guru-ROM V6, and it comes from Schatztruhe (Treasure Chest), a company better known for its software products, including the excellent Aminet CD-ROM series. It promises more speed, better compatibility with outlandish devices, and fixes for a variety of annoying hardware and software bugs - and, as far as I can see, it delivers.

What you get

The GuruRom is a weeny bit of hardware - a little 28 pin ROM chip just like the one that's already on the board of your GVP controller, only this one's mounted on a bit of circuit board with some extra logic on a little chip underneath it and machine pins sticking out the bottom to go into the ROM socket.

Setting up

Installation's easy enough; line the new ROM-board combo up the same way the old ROM was, ignore the worrying couple of gaps in the pins that suggest something broke off when you pulled it off the antistatic foam it comes on, shift a jumper or two as advised by the manual and power up.

Your old gvpscsi.device is now gone, replaced by omniscsi.device. Anything that refers explicitly to SCSI device names, like some cache software for example, will now complain, but bull through to Workbench, copy over a few modified versions of the standard GVP programs (just the little ones - the standard prep programs work fine with a change to the tooltypes or command line), edit your startup a tad, and you're in business.

Wossit do?

Naturally, I made numbers on my system before and after Guru-ROM installation, and the results were quite impressive. I use an A530 hanging off my preposterously expanded A500, and this box is the functional equivalent of a 40MHz 030 Combo board for a 2000. I did speed tests on my nice fast 1Gb DEC hard drive, and also a 230Mb Bernoulli removable cartridge drive. As always, your mileage can and will vary, depending on drive, processor and controller, but I can't see anyone not seeing a marked improvement.

Turning first to the Amiga's finest random number generator, Sysinfo, I ran its drive reading speed test on the DEC with the old ROM and got an uninspiring 950k/S or so. Now, this has nothing much to do with the real world - it just sucks data off the drive and sends it nowhere as fast as it can - but it gives a fair idea of the raw info-pumping prowess of your SCSI system.

New ROM, new test - result about 2.1Mb/S! Whoa! Hey! We're onto something here! Let's

see if DiskSpeed's as complimentary!

Predictably, no. Once you do a "real" drive speed test, moving actual files and scanning actual directories and such, system overheads come into play and raw transfer becomes less important.

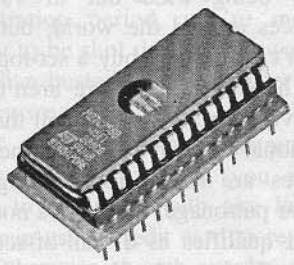
Nonetheless, the new Guru-ROM system did well. With Hypercache, my drive cache of choice, disabled, the new ROM was a shade faster on file manipulation - about 10% better on file opens, directory scanning and seek/read, and the same speed for file creates and deletes.

The advantage was not pronounced on the silly 512 byte buffer test - neck and neck on creates and writes, 8% faster on reads - but once the buffer got bigger the new ROM showed its stuff. With a 4k buffer, it was still much the same for creates and writes but a hefty 48% faster on reads; 32k buffering made it respectively 16%, 31% and 67% speedier, and the 256k buffer topped it out on 24%, 50% and 82% faster - final scores of 650, 119 and 1770k/S respectively. Not bad for a clunky old 500.

CPU availability was unchanged; the new ROM's supposed to suck less CPU time, but I found the difference marginal at best.

The slower Bernoulli drive showed a less marked improvement. While its seek/read score skyrocketed from 82 to 184 files per second (a 224% boost!), directory scan was only 10% better and the others were much the same. The transfer rate improved, but not by nearly as much as the DEC drive's; it topped out for the 256k buffer at about 28% better on writes and reads, and actually slower on creates (Benchmarks. Who needs 'em anyway?). CPU usage was 7% lower. Hurrah.

When I turned the cache back on and flogged the DEC drive with and without the new ROM, the new system scored a bit better on directory manipulation - 10% faster for creates and opens, 10% slower for deletes, equal for seek and scan - and in the data transfer tests the new ROM came up 30% slower for creates, 40% faster for writes and precisely equal for reads. Software caches add extra factors to any hardware storage comparison - a slow drive on a fast computer will beat a fast drive on a slow computer handily if they're both got big caches - but since most serious users run a cache, I thought it was fair to test it.



With the cache, by the way, CPU availability wasn't great, and was practically zero on the RAM-bashing read operations - but the new ROM did cut CPU use by better than 10% on the others.

Documentation

I have to mention the manual that comes with the Guru-ROM. In a mere 55 pages, it contains more information on SCSI as it pertains to the Amiga than I've ever seen in one place before. The guys that put this package together have thought of EVERYTHING, and they've put it all down on paper. It's still pretty heavy going in many places, but if you're under the impression that down and dirty low-level SCSI bashing is easy to get a handle on, you're in for a nasty surprise anyway.

The manual is well written, well laid out - it may be thin, but important information's included more than once if necessary to reduce page-flicking - and absolutely packed with gems of data that show that the authors could build a Wide Fast SCSI-II controller from rubber bands and egg cartons in the dark.

Software

All of your old SCSI utilities will work with the omniscsi-device, but a few programs are included for twiddling Rigid DIsk Block (RDB) settings, driver settings and so on. You can set up RDB-type parameters in the driver, so you don't have to commit possibly disastrous configurations to RDB and discover you've sealed your corkscrew in your bottle when you reboot. It's all well built and exhaustively documented - power user system tweaking doesn't get any easier.

Eh?

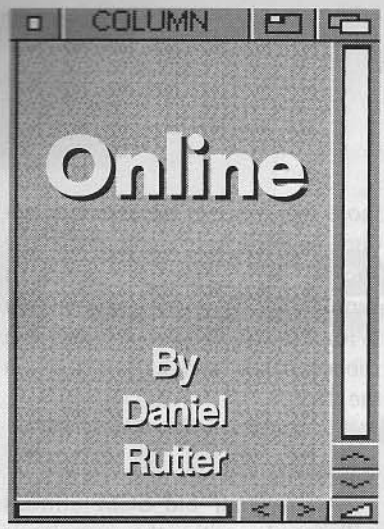
The only thing that puzzles me about the Guru-ROM is that on the back of the manual, and the back of the box, it says "not made in Australia", between a couple of little kangaroos. I have absolutely no idea what this signifies. Anyone who knows gets a free subscription.

The verdict

If you have a 9Mb A500 with an A530, DEC RZ26 drive, NEC 3X CD-ROM, 230Mb Bernoulli drive, Golden Image optical mouse and Sony Multiscan HG monitor, feel free to take all of my benchmarks. Otherwise, just be advised - this gizmo WILL make your old GVP controller noticeably faster, and it may make it MUCH faster for some operations. The exact results depend on your system. Is it worth $140, though? You bet!

Contact Amadeus on (02) 651 1711 for more information.

❑



Hey! The Information Superhighway must be right around the corner! I know it must, those Telstra ads say it is!

For any lucky souls who've managed not to notice the advertisements, they centre around employees of the-organisation-which-until-recently-was-called-Telecom, who do Tardis tricks with vans and lure unsuspecting kids down to play games in drains. But forget the medium; the message is that the much-ballyhooed Superhighway's right around the corner, and with a simple little box on top of the TV you can be a part of it, enjoying online banking, and shopping, and, uh, banking, and, um, lots of other stuff.

There are some facts among the hype, but also some problems. On the plus side, there is indeed quite a lot of optic fibre laid around Australia and around the world, ready to make superfast communication possible. Optic fibre can carry orders of magnitude more data than copper cables, and there's no doubt that global fibre communications will happen someday.

At the moment the vast bulk of the world's optic fibre's referred to as "dark fibre"; it's there, but it ain't doing anything yet. Telecommunications companies around the world have just been taking advantage of other people's cable laying and pipe maintenance to piggyback their fibre into the conduits; it's cheap from a corporate viewpoint, it doesn't matter if it doesn't do anything for a while, and it lets them draw impressive maps of their fibre coverage.

And, if and when home shopping and home banking get going properly, you will indeed be able to hook up to the fibre running past your front gate, in much the same way as people hook up to cable TV - a Telstra or other communication company worker will turn up, make a hole somewhere, splice in a line, take your money and bingo, you're in.

The only problem is, there's nothing to be into yet, and no way to get there if there was. Pilot plans are being tried out in various places around the world, but you can't go out and buy a set-top box to hook up, and there aren't any services to hook up to - all the traditional modem-access online services are ready and waiting for your patronage, but there's nothing that qualifies as a wall-of-screens Superhighway-level experience.

This doesn't mean there never will be any services, of course. But governments and corporations are taking it slowly and carefully and trying to make sure the money gets spent by someone else and the profits go to them. Understandable, common enough, and guaranteed to make sure nothing much happens for quite some time. It takes a group with the power to set a system up all by itself to get the ball rolling, and then Microsoft-style anti-monopoly obstacles arise.

Why aren't governments and corporations striding arm in arm towards the glowing global network future? Well, apart from the fact that they're governments and corporations, neither of which is renowned for cooperation and logical action, the precedents send mixed messages. Cable TV has been a runaway success in the USA, even with quite widespread theft of cable services via unlicensed decoders, so that would seem to suggest that people wouldn't mind spending even more time staring at the box.

But France, the only country that actually has a working, practically universal citizen-to-citizen data network, would seem to provide a case against. France's Minitel system uses antique low speed hardware - it's essentially a glorified two-way Teletext - but when it first emerged great things were predicted, and much was said about the people's forum, democratic advancement, corporate involvement, blah blah blah. What the vast bulk of the Minitel traffic's ended up devoted to, though, is citizen-to-citizen discussion of sex.

There's big money in sex, of course, but the world's big pornography companies, even working together, have approximately one chance in ten grillion of getting anyone important officially interested in a Smut Superhighway.

Another popular argument for maintaining the present, Superhighwayless status quo, is the oft-made statement that there's no public demand for superpowered online services. People have been surveyed. Experts have been consulted. It would appear nobody wants it.

But that doesn't mean vendors can't manufacture a market for the Superhighway. Nobody wanted Post-It notes until someone invented them; I dare anybody reading this to put their hand on their heart and say they've never seen an ad for a product they didn't know they needed until then. Heck, Demtel wouldn't exist if you couldn't manufacture markets.

If there's a buck in it, and I think there is, then people will do it. Eventually. Not necessarily as soon as Telstra would like you to think, but not very long after the turn of the century.

And assuming the Supernet or Superhighway or Globeweb or whatever it ends up being called exists, and people can access it as easily and pretty much as cheaply as they now access TV, there are lots of cool things you could do with it besides paying off your Visa and ordering Tupperware. One idea that rather appeals to me is cutting out the middleman in the sale of creative works.

It works like this. Say you, like me, are a writer. You write an inspiring, incisive piece on the impact of cosmic rays on dual nonlinear overhead induction landing lights. You know for a fact that out there somewhere are a good 10,000 people, out of the five billion or so on the planet, who want to know about this subject, and don't mind paying.

The problem you face today is getting your work to the people who are willing to give you money for it. You can approach a magazine that publishes such material, and if it's accepted they'll pay you a bit for it. But they'll take the sales profits, and that's it.

Now, let's pretend the Hypernet exists, and you can put your article somewhere where people who want to know about it will look - a discussion forum on the subject. People view the article, and if they think it's any good they can click a button and automatically take, say, ten cents from their bank account and put it into yours - a kind of literary shareware, if you will. If 10,000 people do that, you've made a thousand bucks out of your article, which is probably more than the magazine would have paid you by a healthy margin.

Shareware has a mixed reputation for money-making efficacy in the computer world - nobody's made any reliable figures on the number of people who use shareware and don't register it, but it's a very large proportion.

"Shareware that works. Now there's a concept!"

Why don't people register shareware? Well, although it's genuinely and truly illegal to keep using a shareware package past the registration period, you're more likely to be shot dead for jaywalking than busted for not registering shareware.

If there's a local registration point for the package, you just have to ring and, with any luck, you can use a credit card to register. Otherwise, though, you have to go to the trouble of writing out a cheque (mailing cash is illegal in many countries, including Australia) or getting a money order in some other currency, the handling fee for which will be a large portion of the total value, and then mailing it off to a person who might or might not, for all you know, still be at that address. Registering shareware is often awkward and annoying.

But what if registering were much cheaper and much simpler - click a button, pay a buck, peace of mind and the registered version on its way to you in five seconds? Easier than flicking a coin into a busker's hat.

To make this work, you need a secure, financially capable network with near-zero fees, but if you've got it the possibilities are huge.

Let's take it further. Say you're not a specialised writer, but a popular musician or other mass-market artist. You produce your latest work, you release it, a hundred million people grab it and play it or look at it or tickle its tummy or do whatever it is people do with your artworks. Sting each one of those people for one lousy cent and you've got a megabuck right there. Make it a dollar and you can start pricing islands. Get the picture?

What people are paying for now is not music, or prose, or pictures. They're paying for CD pressing, booklet printing, magazine production, distribution charges - a hundred middlemen between you and the source of the product. But if the product can be expressed in a simple, weightless packet of bytes, as a whole load of products can, then it can be distributed for close to nothing. All the intermediate stages can be cut out and the artist need only charge as much as he or she was getting off the top before. Assuming the existence of a practically universal Superhighway, audiences will also get bigger (even taking into account some unavoidable trouble in finding what you want), so prices can drop further as markets expand.

This wouldn't mean the death of the magazine industry, though it would produce a huge metamorphosis. I reckon my job's safe; I write and I edit, and until someone comes up with an automatic way to do both of those tasks (right after the household robot, but before antigravity) I'll be able to keep doing them. But if I was one of the guys who man the vast presses that print this magazine, I'd be more nervous; if I was the guy who owns the whole suburb-sized place where this and a pile of other magazines are printed, I'd be looking to move my millions pretty soon.

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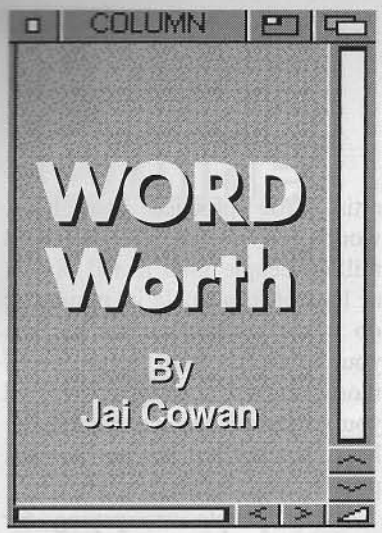

Tables Explained

Last month I explained how to make the most of Wordworth's excellent Template feature. This time I'll explore the table feature.

Wordworth's table function is useful in a number of ways. The number is two. You can enter figures and text, and do various calculations such as totals, minimum, maximum and average. This feature of Wordworth isn't nearly as comprehensive as a proper spreadsheet, but it's handy for quickly drawing up invoices and orders - coupled with the Template function, it's reasonably usable. If you want to do your company's budget on your Amiga, get a dedicated spreadsheet.

The other useful function for tables is formatting text into sections without having to make a million text boxes. For this tutorial we'll do an order for party supplies, also using the letter template we made last month.

Bring up your letter template and move the yours sincerely part down by inserting a few carriage returns. Now bring up the drawing tools menu and select the drag table button. Drag a table the width of the page and the length of the visible part of the page.

Drag the first column in a bit by putting the cursor over it, clicking and dragging. Make the second as wide as it'll go without removing the third column. Place the cursor in the first "Cell" and type "Quantity" or similar; you can easily move through the table by pressing Tab to go forward and Shift-Tab to go back.

The second column is going to display the item's name so put Item in the next cell. The third column is for prices, so label it appropriately.

Now enter the text and numbers in the table the same way you entered the column titles (fig 1).

You can now calculate the total amount the order will cost without using a calculator, or much brainpower. Just put the text insertion point at the bottom right of the table and select Tools/Calculate, and Wordworth will display a menu with the calculations available (fig 2). Select the cells above and total options and then Calculate. Your Amiga will think for a few milliseconds, then insert the total of all the above cells in the current cell in the current font (See fig 3).

I'll give you that this function isn't a very good example of today's computing power, but it'd take Holly of Red Dwarf several hours. You may want to design a template with your company logo and a similar table for invoices, which probably won't speed up the creation process but will look nicer and save you having to work out the subtotals and totals.

If you want to quickly and easily draw up things which involve calculations and tables, check TurboCalc out. But for the occasional job, Wordworth's table and number handling is quite adequate.

Now I'll show you how to use tables to format text more attractively. Select Project/New and then normal document. Draw a table the width and about half the length of the page. Pick your own topic to populate the cells with (fig 4). The beauty of using a table here is that you don't have to use tabs or text boxes, which makes it all very simple.

Quantity	Item	Price
1	6m x 7m Marquee	130
20	Plates, cutlery sets.	60
3	Ice boxes	90
5	Dinner tables	140

Fig 1.

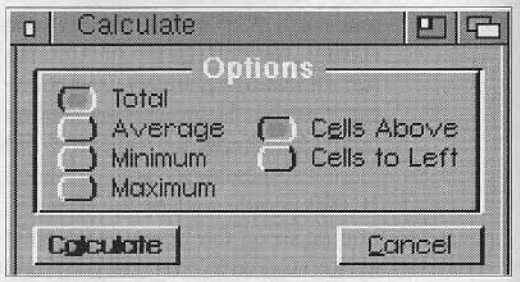

Fig 2.

Quantity	Item	Price
1	6m x 7m Marquee	130
20	Plates, cutlery sets.	60
3	Ice boxes	90
5	Dinner tables	140
	Total	420

Fig 3.

Making Fancy Labels

Wordworth has one tool that places it in a category all of its own when it comes to wordprocessors - the floating text box. You can make text sit pretty much anywhere on the page, just like a real desktop publishing program. In this short tutorial, we're going to make a page of fancy disk labels usng the text box tool, along with the group tool. Here's how it's done.

1. Start by measuring up your labels - you might find the dimensions are already printed on

the back of the cover page at the top of the label packet. Because Wordworth doesn't have any grid tools, or box distribute tools (like Professional Page for example), you'll need to know the location of each label's top left corner from the top and left edge of the page. Work it out, and write down the necessary margin settings on a spare sheet.

2. Start a new project, then go to the Format, Document pull down menu option. Make sure the page size is correct, then as a guide, adjust the margin settings to match the margins around the labels as a group.

3. Now select the drawing tools button, and choose the text tool from the resulting floating tool box. Draw a box roughly the size of the top left labels, following the margin guides. Now choose Object, Information from the pull down menus. This is an important requestor, with features similar to a box information window in any desktop publishing program. Here's where you'll need the figures you wrote down before. Adjust the Front Left and From Top values to match your own measurements. Also adjust the width and height to that of the individual label size (most labels are 9cm x 5cm). You will also want to alter the margin settings for this text box, so that any text is away from the edge of the label. Make sure the Thickness setting is none - and then close the box.

4. The next step is vital. From the Object pull down menu, choose Lock. Now you won't accidentally bump the box, and you can start adding text inside for the label. You can add other components using the drawing tools on the floating tool bar, or the Object, Place Picture pull down menu.

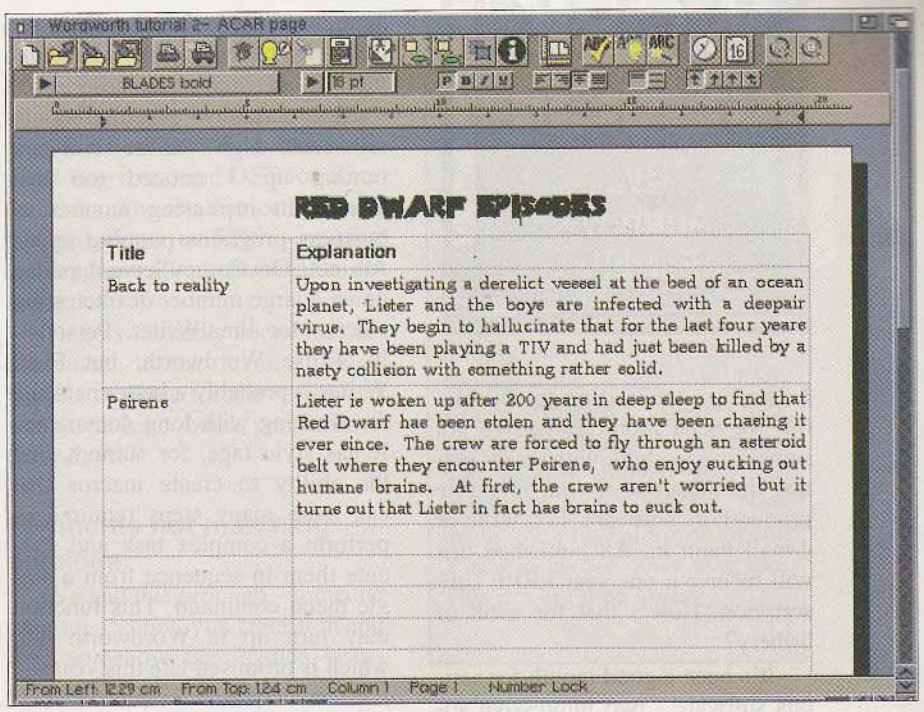

Fig 4.

Once you have one jazzy label you're happy with, go to the next step.

5. Select the pointer tool and drag a bounding box around all the parts of your label, including the original text box. Choose Object, Group. Now select Edit, Copy and then Edit, Paste. You've now made a copy (which is probably missing the text depending on your revision number) - but you can't move it as the text box is locked - which effectively locks the whole group, so choose Object, Unlock. Now double click inside the group bounding box and you'll get the Group Information window. Now you can enter the From Left and Frop Top settings for the right hand label in the first row of labels and there's you first row of labels.

6. Now select the pointer, and drag a bounding box around the entire first row. Select Object, Group. Then Copy and Paste the group. Double click the group to open the Group Information window, and enter the From Left and From Top settings for the first label in the second row. Now do Copy, Paste and double click again to enter the position of the third row - and so on, for as many rows as you need.

7. The final step is to go to the main text box on the first label and then copy and paste the text onto the other labels. You'll have to ungroup everything first. Now you're ready to print!

TIP: When filling out margin settings and the like, use Amiga-X to delete the box contents, enter a new value, then press TAB to go to the next item to be filled out... it's much quicker than using the mouse.

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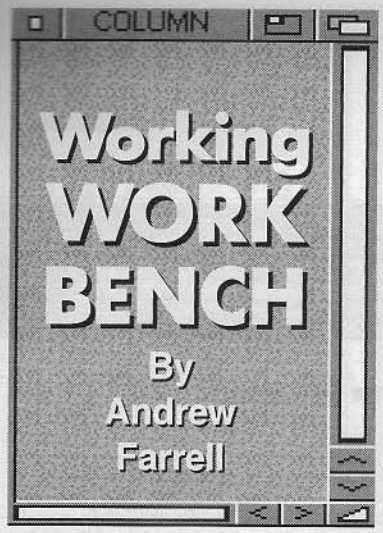


◗ The tips are starting to roll in - but we need more! If you've got something to share with us on getting the most out of your favourite productivity software, fax, write or e-mail them in. All published tips will receive a one year FREE subscription. How's that for a bit of bribery?

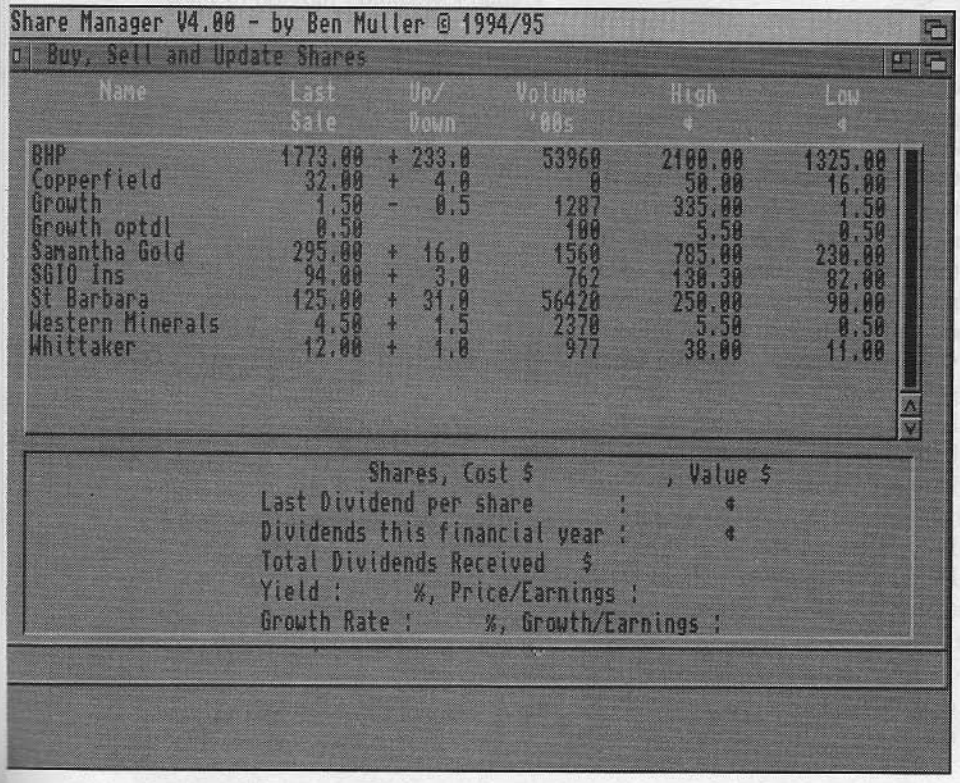
It's been a good month for serious software - two impressive applications rolled across my desk. The first was POSWIZ, which is reviewed elsewhere in this issue. It's got one of the best AMOS interfaces I've ever seen in such a program. The other is Share Manager, a full review of which we hope to have together by next month.

It's certainly encouraging to see such high calibre software turning up. I noticed too that there's an increasing number of business programs popping up on Aminet. On CompuServe I pulled down a large number of interesting macros for FinalWriter. Personally, I use Wordworth, but Final Writer is probably a better package for working with long documents. It has style tags, for starters, and the ability to create macros that can store many steps required to perform a complex task and execute them in sequence from a single menu command. This function may turn up in Wordworth 4.0, which is promised late this year.

Share Manager

A little more info on this winner. Share Manager will manage shares and other financial unit investments. It includes index graphs, daily share price movements, share price and volume graphs including overlay indices, line or bar charts and selectable periods. The program is aimed at the personal investor or small trader.

There are limits to the value or size of a portfolio - but these should be more than enough for most investors. You'll need Workbench 2.0 or better, an internal clock (or use Preferences every time you boot), and a printer would be a good idea. If you want more information, call Muller Publishing on (09) 381 4180, or write to them at 7 Ellen Street, Subiaco WA 6008.



Digita Organiser

I have been making constant use of Digita's wonderful Organiser program - but there are a few features I'd like to see them add. Top of the list is an AREXX port, and the reason is very simple.

On my PC I can use one program to send faxes, write letters, and keep track of people I deal with. On the Amiga I can almost do the same thing for much less money, but right now it is a little less elegant. You see, in an ideal world I would organise my entire day with Organiser, and then keep using it throughout the day to do things.

Say I have to send you a fax or a letter. I would pull up your contact record and then initiate an AREXX script that took the information from that record, ran Final Writer (or Wordworth 4.0 perhaps) and then inserted your details so that I was now looking at a letter complete with salutation, addresses

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Left: *Share Manager*

- everything. Next up, I fill in the body and print to fax, or printer. The final step here is to have a text file attached to each contact record that contains a log of my action thus creating a history of every dealing with each person on my database. This was partly the purpose of the program I partly wrote in CanDo that was mentioned last month.

I certainly stand by my original comments however - for a version 1.0 product Organiser is splendid and deserves every success. If you have your Amiga on all day on your desk or workstation, this is THE program to help you to get organised. It will track events, lists of things to do, and people. If you have not seen Organiser run call Amadeus on (02) 651 1711 and ask for a free demo copy. (Version 2.0 is in the works - more info on what it will do as soon as we know more!)

Final Write Add Ons

We've released a new disk especially for Final Writer fans containing a number of useful macros. FinalWaver creates sine-waves out of text. There's macros for easy centering, stretching and expanding of objects.

You can easily convert text into blocks, resize grouped objects, and add a three dimensional shadow to a selected block of text. FinalFax95 makes switching between the GP-Fax and regular print driver easier - without switching screens. There's also macros for printing envelopes, and some real tricky stuff that lets you wrap text around a shape! To order call our mail order hotline on 1-800 252 879.

EasyLedgers Update

I am very interested to hear from people using EasyLedgers 2 We've been running the program here at Storm Front Studios - but only for accounts receivable. Some feedback from businesses using the entire program would be useful. Small-Biz Software are now shipping revision .06 which has some small bug fixes, and GST for other countries. The retail price has been dropped down to $299 - making the program a very reasonable offering indeed.

There's certainly room for improvement in the invoice design module to cater for the weird and wonderful letter heads people have these days!

Payments not matching invoices

We had this problem - someone pays an account, you enter it in and then somehow the invoice keeps popping up on the statement. The trick is to be sure you actually choose the invoice to apply the payment to. You do this by double clicking on the invoice to apply the payment to in the sales receipt window.

TIP of the month

Digita Organiser: This is an easy feature to miss and one that is sadly lacking from similar program on other platforms costing much more money! If you have schedule an appointment - or thing to do on a certain day - and then decide it is in fact just a task, no problem. Simply select the appointment, choose Edit, Copy (or Left-Amiga-Amiga-C) then flick over to Tasks and choose paste. You've now moved your appointment to the task list. Now delete the original appointment. You can go the other way too! This is a big time saver.

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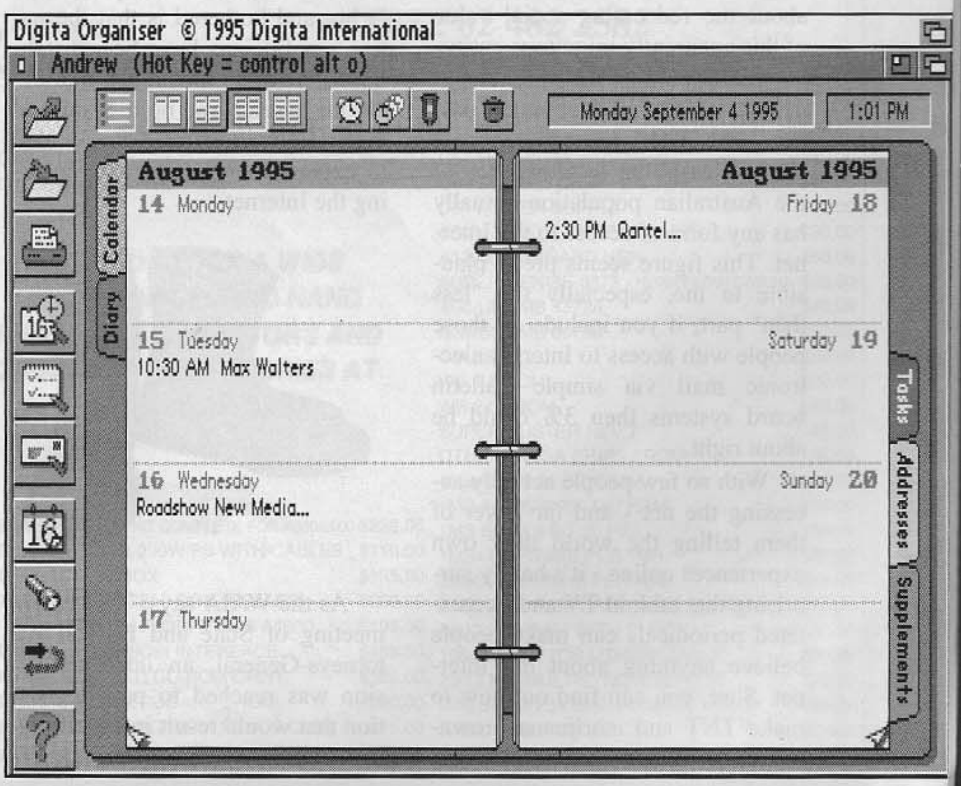
BELOW: *Digita Organiser - the diary in action.*



Net News

Big Brother doesn't know where to look...

By Daniel Rutter

The Western Australian Internet Association (WAIA) has spoken out against ill-informed media hysteria and wanton story inflation. The flurry of "The Internet Turns Your Kids Into Hippie Nazi Anarchist Rapist" stories seems to have subsided, but it's left in its wake a public rather skeptical about the redeeming social value of this apparently iniquitous entity.

The trouble is, the Internet still isn't anything like a common pastime. The WAIA states in its recent press release that less than 3% of the Australian population actually has any form of access to the Internet. This figure seems pretty plausible to me, especially the "less than" part; if you include all those people with access to Internet electronic mail via simple bulletin board systems then 3% could be about right.

With so few people actually accessing the net - and far fewer of them telling the world their own experiences online - it's hardly surprising that tabloid TV and overexcited periodicals can make people believe anything about the Internet. Sure, you can find out how to make TNT and marijuana brownies on the net, but information just as alarming is available in public libraries. What the Stories No Parent Should Miss fail to mention is, as the WAIA points out, "the positive side of the 'net as an unparalleled communications medium, social interaction area and a source of seemingly infinite information".

What has the WAIA particularly hot and bothered is that the nation's politicians have been listening to the mass media just like everyone else. Now, both State and Federal governments have decided to expend their energy on censoring the Internet.

As the WAIA says: "In a recent meeting of State and Federal Attorneys-General, an interim decision was reached to pass legislation that would result in a 'self regulated industry', with the industry moderating and judging its own actions." The problem is that the legislation in question treats all online services much the same - as if they are simple bulletin boards. This is like studying bicycles, noting that they're pretty narrow and then passing a law that says all roads should be repainted with three times as many lanes.

A car is not a bike, and the Internet is not a bulletin board. Self-regulation of the Internet would need a huge revamp of the current Internet Service Provider (ISP) and dial-up account holder system, because what the legislation in question's trying to forbid is the transmission of objectionable material, and especially the access of unsuitable material by minors.

When you buy yourself an account with a service provider and set up your access software, all the service provider's really doing is handling all the mundane housework involved to connect your computer and its software to the vastness of the net. They're not looking at what you're doing, they're not screening what you get or send, they really don't care very much what goes on as long as you pay your bills. As the WAIA points

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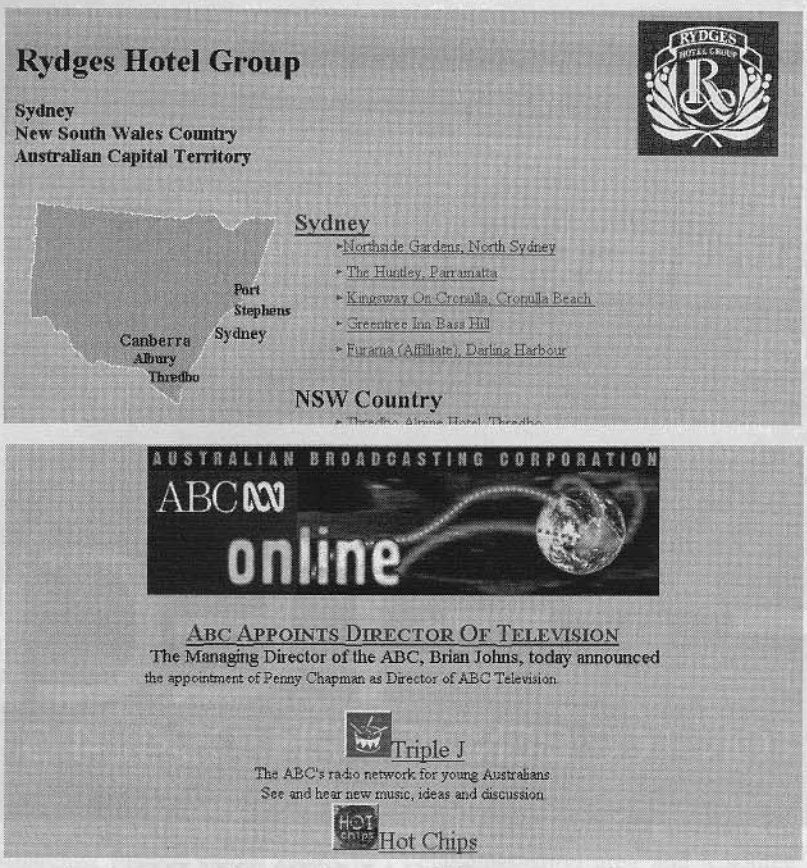


Top to bottom: *1) Rent a room on the Web.*
2) ABC Online.

out, they're more like a phone company than a newspaper.

Now let's say the tabloids are right. If service providers are supposed to self-regulate, then they're expected to stop you getting questionable stuff. As things stand, there's simply no sure way they can do it.

If you're accessing an old-fashioned bulletin board system (BBS), as many people still are, things are different. Post a message containing bad language or slanderous remarks, and you may have your account deleted. However, you won't find dubious files unless the proprietor of the BBS deliberately makes them available for download.

But Internet service providers don't, and can't, vet their traffic. If they're any good, there's far too much of it, anyway. Another problem with classifying and censoring Net traffic is the fact that an essential component of Internet communication is its great speed. A message from one side of the planet to the other via free-access Fidonet takes days - it's often faster than air mail, but compared with the handful of seconds an Internet communique takes it's an age. Stick some sort of W. Heath Robinson pulleys and string classification engine into the system and the continuous, mercurial exchange of data that makes the Internet what it is will instantly bog down hopelessly.

And there's more. The WAIA points out that any accreditation scheme, which would invariably involve a significant fee, would be a big hurdle for service providers starting out on a shoestring. This problem already exists for small-time game software importers; now that all games have to be vetted by the Office of Film and Literature Classification in an annoying and expensive process, anyone bringing in entertainment software in a small-business operation either has to give it up or risk a not inconsiderable busting.

And although it's not quite as newsworthy as the Internet Ate My Children stories, it is in fact already possible for concerned parents to censor their kids', or indeed their own, net access. Surfwatch software for IBM compatibles and Macs avoids anything that looks immoral (whether or not it actually is - the automatic filtering Surfwatch uses makes inaccessible, for example, any Web site with "sex" in its title...). And, shock horror, you COULD just keep an eye on the kids. As I've said before, the Internet may be disorganised but it's certainly well labelled. If you don't walk into sex shops by accident on your way to the library, you shouldn't have any trouble spotting the nasties on the net.

No laws have yet been passed regarding censorship, and the government does look like it's listening to people who know more about the Internet than A Current Affair and the Telegraph Mirror.

You can contact the WA Internet Association via its spokesperson, Kimberley Heitman, at kheitman@it.com.au, or on (09) 458 2790.

Incoming!

One of my hobbies (hobby, noun, pastime on which you spend a whole load of money for no reason you can articulately explain) is radio controlled cars. I like radio controlled cars, because when you crash them they're generally very

Top to bottom:
1) Embarrassing Oz culture 1
2) Embarrassing Oz culture 2
3+4) Thank goodness for these

close to the ground already.

Radio controlled aircraft are a whole 'nother story, and if you want to read a collection of stories about what happens when the rubber band lets go at 800 feet and the prop saws off the antenna, check out http://www.duke.edu/~tlm7/rc/crashes.html, a large file of rueful stories from people who've watched a thousand bucks and two months of balsa modelling go whizz-WHACK.

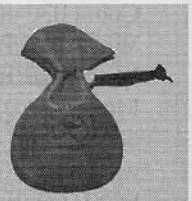
Incidentally, at http://www.prairienet.org/business/tower/rcweb.html you'll find a comprehensive directory of radio-control stuff, should you also like making little annoying motorised things belt about for no good reason. This tower directory is actually the Web site for Tower Hobbies, a Californian outfit that stocks most everything you could ever want for radio control and even static modelling, and has its full catalogue online, with either easy hypertext searching or a single text file version available for FTP. If you're forms-capable, you can send orders online, but the usual caveat emptor rule for sending your credit card details over unsecured connections apply. I think the actual chance of getting your card number ripped off is pretty remote - you're more likely to be defrauded the old fashioned way, by an employee of a company you by from - but given the ingenuity of online miscreants it pays to be cautious. Be a rene-

Continued on page 42...

The Tall Surf Ugg Boot Price: Mens US$ 145 CODE UGT5

The Standard Gussett Ugg Boot
Price: Mens US$ 99 CODE SGU9

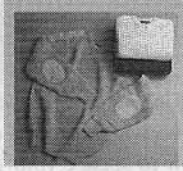
Kangaroo Scrotum



Yes, a real Kangaroo Scrotum. A small (depending on the size of the Kangaroo) leather pouch made from the animal's scrotum. The Kangaroo, a protected species, is occasionally harvested to control their prolific breeding habits.

While many believe it can bring luck to the owner, a number of locals use it to keep to keep their personal tobacco nice and dry. **Price US$ 15** Please add US$ 5 for shipping.

Jumbuk Sweaters



This beautiful garment is made from the finest 100% wool. A rib sweater with matching elbow and shoulder leather patches to ensure longevity.

Eagerly sought by the international market this product comes in three natural colours, Grey White and Brown and in, small, medium, large, and extra large.

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For thousand of years Opals have been considered to be somewhat clairvoyant, giving foresight to the wearer. It was used to decorate Crowns and insigna of royalty and is sometimes called the "cupid stone". The Black Opal pictured retails in excess of $100,000. Many admire these Opals and are astonished as to the number of different colours you can see within a clear gem.

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that maintain its ridability. The similarity between the plan curve and profile curve, create smooth transitions throughout all turns.

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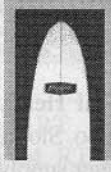

Performance Cruiser Weight

The proportions of this Mid Board are derived from the first "short boards" of the late sixties. The surfing of two young surfers, Nat Young and Wayne Lynch highlights the degree to which this style of board represents the bridge between the old and the new style of surfing. Surfing films of that era, like Evolution and Fantastic Plastic Machine are testimony to the fact that this size of board suits the widest range of surfing styles and ability.

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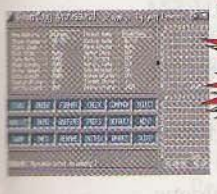

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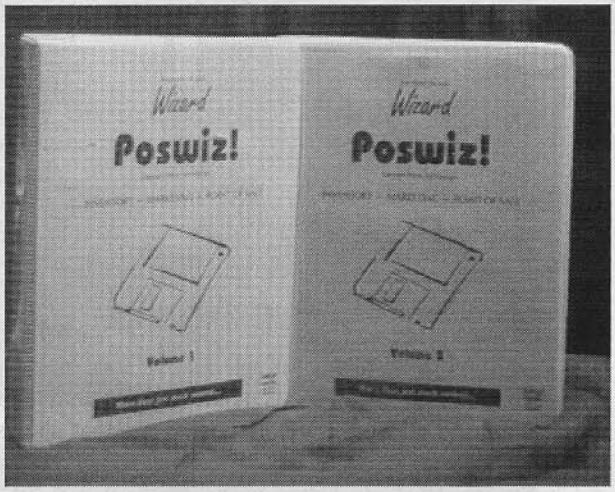


By Daniel Rutter

A new Australian program called Poswiz aims to put the Amiga on the front counter of many stores. Poswiz is a retail point of sale, inventory and marketing program. A small retailer could save around $2000 off the price of an equivalent IBM based system thanks to the lower cost of the software, and cheaper hardware needed to run it. Poswiz will work nicely on an unexpanded A1200. Most IBM systems require a hefty 486.

It works by letting you enter your stock and who supplies it. The program handles the sales and ordering. Poswiz considers stock management and sales more important than accounting. Stock is where your money is, so to manage your money, you need to manage your stock.

Poswiz is not an accounting package. You can't print a trial balance, for example. All it looks after is stock, customers and suppliers. This might sound limiting, but when you consider this includes sales, ordering, deliveries, payments, history, and reporting, it covers almost everything a typical retailer needs.

You can enter over 30,000 different lines with multiple suppliers for each - that's more than the average Woolworths store! The same goes for your suppliers and customers.

Stock can be organised in several different ways. Each item belongs simultaneously to a department, a product range and a group. These divisions allow you to record sales information according to physical location, brand name and target age group. As each department, range and group also has a discount, you can have a sale on all items of a certain brand name or department by changing a single setting.

For larger or expensive items, the program can track serial numbers, so you can find out what items are in the store and who bought what and when. You can list the serial numbered items purchased by any particular customer.

Suppliers and Ordering

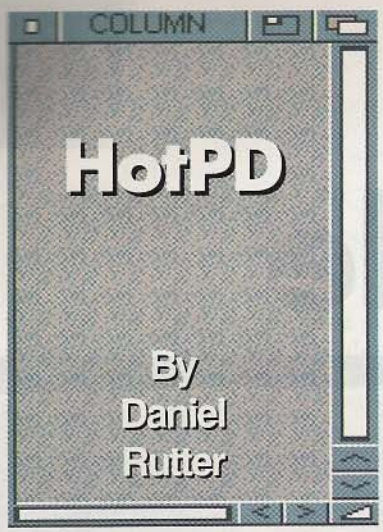
The program lets you enter all your suppliers' details and create and print orders to them. Supplier's name, address and contact details are recorded, along with up to three phone numbers. As several suppliers can supply the same item, there's a function for entering the ordering details for each item, from each supplier. You can enter the different ways the stock is supplied and select one supplier as the preferred one for an item. These details are used when the program generates stock orders, to determine the best supplier to order from.

Poswiz lets you create orders automatically or manually, then edit them before printing. The automatic ordering function features a comprehensive set of controls to make sure that the program only orders what is required. You can tailor the process to order only certain items, decide the best supplier for each, and set a budget limit on the total order.

Customers and Sales

Customers can be entered if you want to use the layby and account sales functions. The program actually allows for multiple laybys and invoices per customer. Sales are made using a cash register win-

Contined on page 57 . . .



RotPatch ☆☆

Here's this month's Destroy Someone's Life program. It's a ROT13 patcher.

ROT13, for them as don't know, is the simple alphabetic rotation of all letters by 13 characters, wrapping around at the ends. So, in ROT13, hello world becomes uryyb jbeyq. It's a simple pseudo-code, easy to decode but difficult to read, and is hence commonly used for encoding possibly offensive text or hiding puzzle solutions.

RotPatch, however, ROT13's all your system text. Icons, screen titles, menus, you name it. Everything still works exactly the same way it did before, it's just illegible. As I believe I've said before, I'm sure you know someone who deserves this.

Masterblaster ☆

Another DynaBlasters clone. Imitation sincerest form of flattery, and all that. If you've never played a DynaBlasters game, get out more. Square grid, bricks, bombs. Bombs blast to four cardinal compass directions, break bricks, kill people, range of blast and number of bombs droppable at once varies depending on powerups. Various other powerups. Up to five players with one of them four player joystick adapter things.

Simple. Fun.

This take on the concept features extra powerups including remote-controllable bombs (chase the other guy around with 'em!), a shop for extra bonuses in between levels, and an annoying soundtrack.

MemDoubler ☆☆☆

A stupid program, but fun. MemDoubler is one of those things that shows up on a BBS with the file description "Double your RAM for nothing!" and gets downloaded by a roughly equal mix of chumps and people who just want to see what the heck it is.

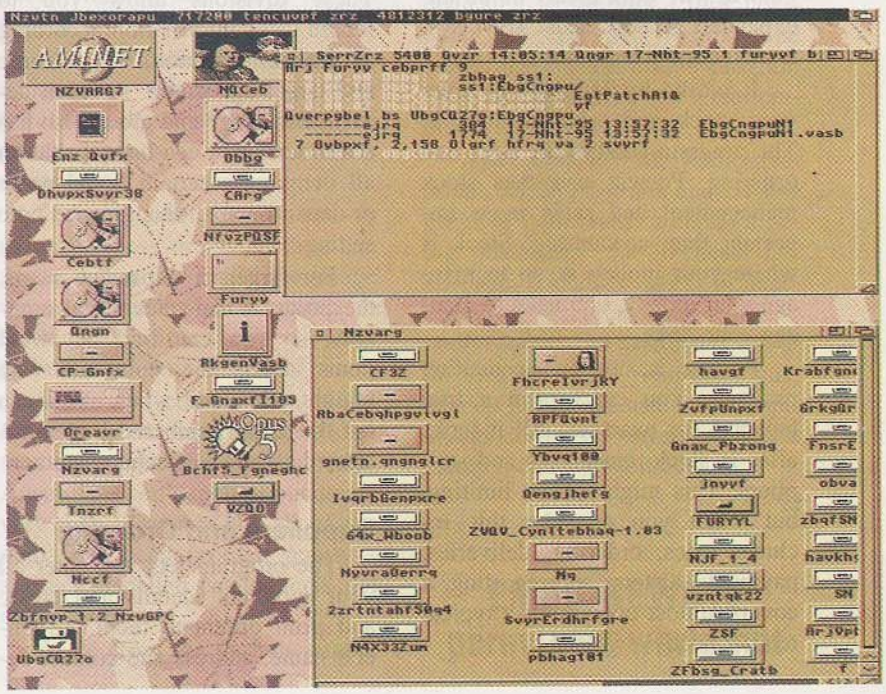
What it is is a hack to fool the system into thinking it's got more RAM. It hasn't, but it thinks it has - right up until it tries to USE that extra RAM.

You can multiply your fast and chip RAM separately, by up to a factor of 10. Nothing actually seems to crash when it tries to use nonexistent RAM - it just LOOKS as if there's more memory when you do an Avail or check the memory display on Workbench. But it'd certainly confuse the heck out of someone if hidden in their startup. Not, of course, that I advocate... oh, who am I fooling?

Program complexity
☆ Oprah viewers
☆☆ Melrose addicts
☆☆☆ Roseanne-ites
☆☆☆☆ Anything by Dennis Potter

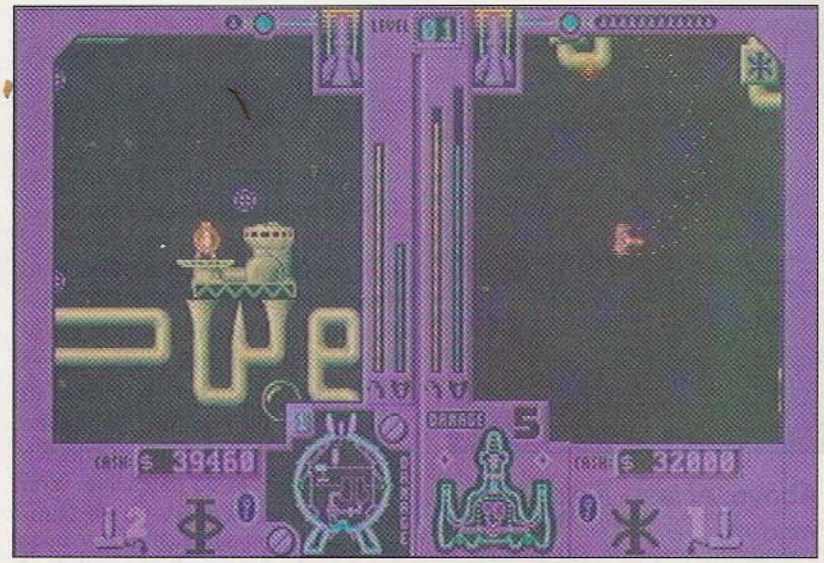
Art of Rocketry ☆

I'm a sucker for a Thrust game, and here's another one. The Art of Rocketry is a nicely designed though somewhat fiddly one or two player little-ships-in-a-maze game, with a selection of oddly named ships which cost different amounts and have different rocket thrust, mass, fuel and cargo capacities, missile loads and guns.



Right: *Rotpatch. Incredibly annoying.*

Top: *The Art of Rocketry*
Below: *Bratwurst - it looks much cooler in motion.*



There are deviously designed levels, things to pick up, hostile scenery, homing missiles - all the usuals. If it weren't for bits of sloppy coding, like the way you can stick your ship inside a wall and die, it'd be excellent.

This is just the demo version of the full registered game, which has a couple more ships, a level editor and more groovy stuff; check it out on the companion disks and see if you like it.

UnLock ☆☆☆

A simple, tiny program. Now and then you want to delete something, and find you can't, because some dumb program's put a Lock () on it and not removed it when it finished with it. It's usually an assign or CD or something that's had its head cut off and now can't be easily killed. There are two ways to deal with this problem; reboot, or use a system monitor program like, for example, the monster Scout I reviewed last month, to kill the lock manually. UnLock is a weeny utility whose main purpose is killing off unwanted locks; you can also use it to show you what locks currently exist. You can even kill locks according to a wildcard pattern, if you like.

Tiny, useful, on the companion disks. You need Workbench 2 to run Unlock.

Olt ☆☆

Very small program. Displays simple hour-minute-second timer (On Line Timer, hence name) in little bar on Workbench. ARexx port with not many commands. No other significant functions. On companion disks. Not worth more text than this.

Bratwurst ☆

I mentioned this oddly named Thrust-ish multiplayer combat game a couple of months ago, and it's been updated. The changes aren't revolutionary - there are more ships and some of the old ships have some new guns. You still need an AGA machine to play it, and it's still great fun - especially if you have more than two players.

Three's good, four's insane. I said plenty about this game last time, and it's now a bit better. On the companion disks.

...continued from page 39

gade like me - stay up till three in the morning and call them. They're ever so amused when you quote a four digit postcode.

Web hotels

Rydges Hotel Group is the largest Australian owned and managed hotel group in the country, with a collection of hotels here and in New Zealand. They also now have a website, at http://www.world.net/rydges/. The website lets you look at pictures and highly complimentary descriptions of Rydges hotels, and you can leave your own feedback or even make a credit card reservation online - if you're brave enough to tell the world your card number, of course.

At the moment, many hotels don't have descriptions available, but as a forerunner of the web-linked business paradise people keep saying is just around the corner, this is pretty good.

Online Aussie mall!

The Shop Australia Mall at http://www.ozemail.com.au:80/gday/ contains a plethora of things distinctively Australian at discounted prices, and you can buy online with Mastercard or Visa or, more sanely, call a phone order line.

There certainly is a fine selection of things Australia is known for, even if we're not at all sure we want to be. In the various virtual shops you'll find Driza-Bones, moleskins, Akubra hats, leather goods (of which more later...), Rugby gear, surfboards, items promoting locally brewed amber fluids, opals, golf tours, gourmet (read - peculiar) food, contact lenses, jewellery, adventure holidays and the suddenly hip yet, many would agree, generally loathsome UGG boot.

I feel the need for a brief editorial at this point.

Now, I know some people who wear UGG boots. My mother is among them. But they have the decency to wear them when slopping about at home. UGG boots may be comfy, they may be warm, but they are NOT fashion accessories. They are NOT cool. Along with purple Monaros, skintight vinyl and the Bee Gees, they are artifacts of a bygone age whose time has most definitely passed. Australia got over them in the late 70s and I for one was happy to see them go. I do NOT need to see any more pictures of Pamela Anderson wearing them. Thank you.

Just the same, good luck to the bloke who makes 'em. Anyone who can make a fortune out of making Americans look like idiots is all right with me.

Joining the fabulous UGG products in the "things that shouldn't exist" category is one of the products on sale in the leather goods store. It is a small leather pouch, such as one might use for storing coins or tobacco. It is generally unremarkable in appearance, except for the fact that it has no seams.

This is because it is made from a kangaroo scrotum. The entry tastefully notes that the size of the pouch depends on the size of the donor 'roo.

I don't doubt they'll sell as many of these things as they can make, but is this really the image we as a nation wish to project to the world's online shoppers? Daggy boots and genital leather?

While I'm complaining, might I mention that visitors to these sites may get the impression that Australians can't spell or punctuate very well. The text for all of the items has been proofed poorly - and a misspelled catalogue is not impressive.

Aside from the various simple typos, you'll be pleased to know that the rather expensive handmade bridle leather Plainsman briefcase comes with "a three year guarantee against workmanship." That's right, you get all your money back if you find any workmanship in this product.

The mall site's really aimed at them foreign chaps, with prices listed in US dollars and a free 1800 number for callers from the States. But if you're embarrassed to buy one of those distinctive coin pouches over the counter, or hanging out for a tubular zip-up receptacle for six cans of beer, or like the look of the rather tasteful Pierre Cardin opal-faced watches which may indeed be cheaper than in the stores, this is a handy online catalogue no matter where you live.

ABC Online

At http://www.abc.net.au/ you'll find ABC Online, your link to all the branches of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, their programs, their activities and their products.

The only ABC TV areas are dedicated to the Hot Chips computer program and Behind The News, the current affairs program for schoolkids - the site's real emphasis at present is radio.

ABC Classic FM, Radio National, Radio Australia and JJJ FM get their own areas, with JJJ's being predictably the liveliest. The JJJ pages contain a variety of interesting and peculiar areas - offbeat online comics, an exhaustive list of the ever growing J Wear catalogue, info on hot new music and compilations on the JJJ record label, and plenty more. Check it out.

❑

EMAIL NEWS to pcreview@world.net

Above: *At last - a nice info window.*

● ● ● ● ● ● ●

8n1.device ☆☆☆

The Amiga serial.device, as used by default by anything doing serial communications, is a wonderful thing.

It has so many options. Options few people use, like XON/XOFF handshaking, parity, odd numbers of data and stop bits. In the olden days, settings other than eight data bits, no parity, one stop bit (8n1) were common, but today they only survive on a few proprietary systems - CompuServe and sundry corporate lines.

If you call a bulletin board, you use 8n1 and maybe RTS/CTS handshaking, and that's all you need, so that's all 8n1.device supports.

The idea is to make a serial device with as little extra going on as possible, to get minimum system overhead. Unless you're using a very fast modem and a very slow Amiga you won't notice faster transfers with a new serial device, but you will notice less system slowdown.

I tried 8n1.device out, and it worked; the difference in CPU time used isn't all that noticeable on a fast machine, but if you're running a 68000 or slow 020 machine with a fast modem (14,400 or 28,800 Bps) you'll feel the difference.

There is one shortcoming, though, for people with DMA hard disk controllers (ye olde GVP Series II, for example) which cause serial errors on disk access unless you use a patcher program to choke back the controller when the serial device is in use. 8n1.device doesn't seem to be patchable. You have been warned. It's on the companion disks, anyway.

Giga.device ☆☆☆☆

Another new and exciting device, this time for owners of Enormous Hard Drives. If you have a drive bigger than 4Gb and you're trying to use it as an ordinary AmigaDOS device, you'll note that it doesn't work properly. This is because AmigaDOS can only handle 4Gb of RAM (rather a lot) and 4Gb of disk space on each drive (still rather a lot, but possible to exceed nowadays). Partitioning won't help - it's a device level problem.

Giga.device is a quick and dirty workaround for the problem. It sits on top of your SCSI device and carves the drive up into chunks of up to 4Gb, which can be dealt with as separate devices.

Provided your SCSI device supports SCSI direct commands, almost everything should work with giga.device drives, although apparently the free space indicators go bananas. Interestingly, it appears that in the olden days of AmigaDOS, drive offsets, and hence maximum sizes, were defined as longwords, not the present ulongword.

What this means in English was that hard drives for early AmigaDOSes could be from 2Gb to minus 2Gb. To my knowledge, nobody has ever sold a drive with less than no capacity.

Old software that still thinks drives can only be 2Gb in size will still screw up, but everything else should work. Hey, it's worth a try.

Giga.device is shareware, with the registered version allowing you to use your big drive at an address other than 0. As the author quite reasonably says, if you can afford a hard drive bigger than 4Gb you can also afford to send him a bit of cash - he suggests $US5 per gigabyte.

Jouster 3 ☆

Ah, Joust. Now there's a game. Flapping around on a bird, knocking other guys off their birds, collecting eggs, avoiding lava. A classic in the arcades, a classic on Apple II and other dino-PCs, and now a quite good version of a classic on the Amiga.

This version of Joust doesn't feel as good as the Apple II conversion, in my humble opinion; it's a tad jerky and you can fly off the top of the screen. But there are all the original features and power-ups and -downs too, not to mention a two player mode that lets you play as a team on some levels and against each other on others, so it's still worth having.

If you wouldn't mind playing a Real Game for a change from these million colour virtual reality total immersion experiences the kids seem to like so much these days, then give it a go.

The only problem with Jouster 3 is it's huge - too big for a floppy - thanks to the two giant and not terribly good looking animations included for the intro and help screen. So I've put it on a separate disk with a hard disk installer. Order it as "Jouster 3".

ClockWatcher ☆☆☆

Every now and then a game, or some other odd program, will stomp your battery backed clock's settings. You will then, traditionally, go about your business for a day or so before noticing your machine is littered with files that think they were made in 1978.

Programs to notice odd clock settings aren't a new idea, but this is an elegant one; just put it in your startup and it'll tell you if the time is apparently earlier than the last time it was started, or a definable number of days later; if something's wrong, you can reset the clock from a simple interface.

CloneClock ☆☆☆

Still on the subject of confused clocks, here's a little program for people with a couple of Amigas hooked up with Parnet, the slow but cheap parallel networking system. It lets you easily set the clock of one machine from the other. That's about it. The program is about as tiny as this description, so it's on the companion disks.

ExtraInfo ☆☆

The Workbench Information window is not great. Dodgy layout, no keyboard shortcuts, no easy way to cut, copy and paste tooltypes settings - and it paralyses Workbench while it's up.

ExtraInfo is a program that tries to get around this problem. It doesn't patch the Information menu item - if you choose that, you still get the same old display - but it does let you pick a file to get info on from a file requester or, more usefully, use an AppIcon (that's right, WB2+ only) so you can just drag an icon onto the AppIcon and be in business.

Call ☎ 1800 252 879 to order your HotPD 27!

When the ExtraInfo window's open you can, of course, just drag fresh icons in there instead, and the bit of window you drop them on determines whether they're loaded as a new icon for display or if their name's put into a gadget, or their image used to replace the current one.

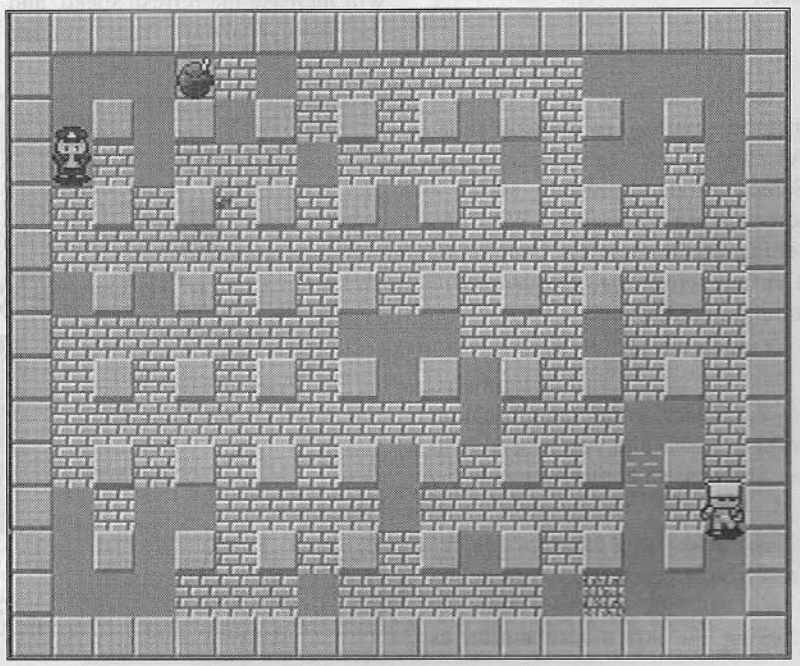
ExtraInfo provides a total of four possible "pages" of modifiable information for an icon, depending on what sort of icon it is. There are pages for tooltypes, file info, volume info and icon info.

There are a few functions not present in the standard Information window - easy colour remapping and depth changing, file version and type identification (using whatis.library, which out of the kindness of my heart I've added to the version of ExtraInfo on the companion disks), position unsnapping, even independent access flag setting for multi-user filesystems. I can't honestly say the lousiness of the standard Information window has damaged my life noticeably, but ExtraInfo's worthwhile nonetheless.

Buy! Buy! Buy!

All of the software mentioned in this article, except for the rather large Jouster 3, is on the companion disks. They're called HotPD27a and b, and you can have them for $9.50 including postage from Prime Artifax on 1800 252 879. If you want Jouster 3 as well, it'll be $13.50 altogether; Jouster 3 by itself is $5.

Call now - stocks are strictly limited by the number of disks that can be pushed through the copying machines. ❑



Right: *Masterblaster - Done before, but done well here.*

Desktop PUBLISHING

12 ProPage Tips

Work faster and smarter

By Andrew Farrell

It is no secret we publish two monthly magazines using Professional Page - the other magazine is Australian PC Review. We're still trying to work out how to break it to all those PC clone users out there that they're favourite magazine is created using an Amiga. Anyhow, after years of pumping out pages, we figured we could come up with twenty good tips on how to make Professional Page sing.

1. If you have 2Mb of chip memory, and you're working on an A4 page, use the Preferences, Screen Mode option to select a screen sized 800 x 950. With this setting you'll enjoy the benefits of a virtual screen that you can scroll around in an instant.

(see figure 1)

2. Select your magnification level to 100% and you'll be able to see and read an entire A4 page.

3. Make sure interruptable refresh (under Preferences) is ticked - you can tick multiple items by clicking the left mouse button as you move up and down a menu with the right mouse button held down. In this mode of operation, if a page is refreshing and you don't want to wait, just hit space or activate the menu you require.

4. For making text corrects on a page with a lot of other graphics, fills and the like - switch wireframes on under preferences and select black and white mode. This will increase the refresh speed, and the Amiga always runs quicker with less colours being displayed (unless you're using a 24-bit graphics card).

5. There's a few basic short cuts worth learning - you'll see them on the pull down menus. But be careful - highlighted text will be replaced with whatever key you press if it's not a short cut.

6. Press ESC to UNDO any accidental changes.

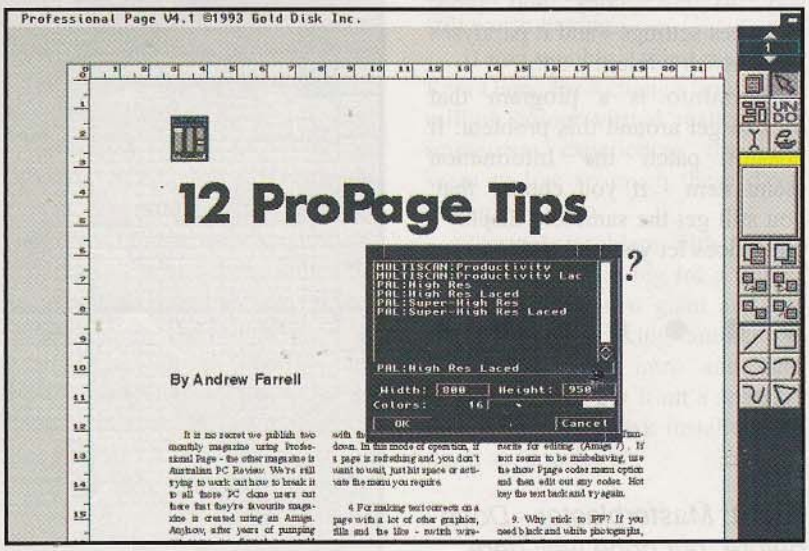


Fig 1

7. If you pick up a box by mistake and start to move it, press ESC while you're still holding the mouse button or even after you've dropped the box to return it to the original position.

8. Hot key text out into Transwrite for editing. (Amiga /) . If text seems to be misbehaving, use the show Ppage codes menu option and then edit out any codes. Hot key the text back and try again.

(see figure 2)

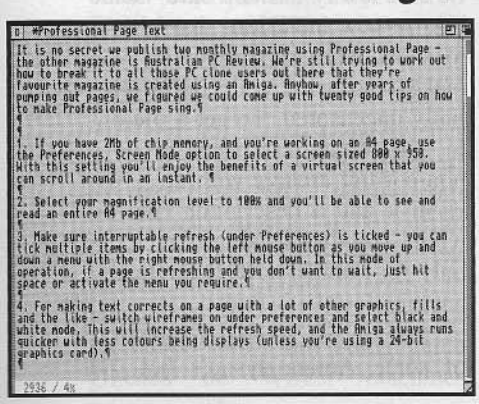
9. Why stick to IFF? If you need black and white photographs, (since ProPage 4.1 will bomb importing 8-bit IFF images) convert them to GIF using Art Department! GIF is by far the most reliable file format in ProPage - don't ask why, just use it.

10. Use the load and save page option to copy elements between different folios. (But be careful, loading a page will bring all the style tags and colour settings with it.)

11. Get the AREXX Genies in our Public Domain software library - they'll save you a stack of time for tiling business cards, labels, outputting a lot of files to postscript, copy pages, fitting a bitmap to a box and a whole stack more.

(see figure 3)

Fig 2



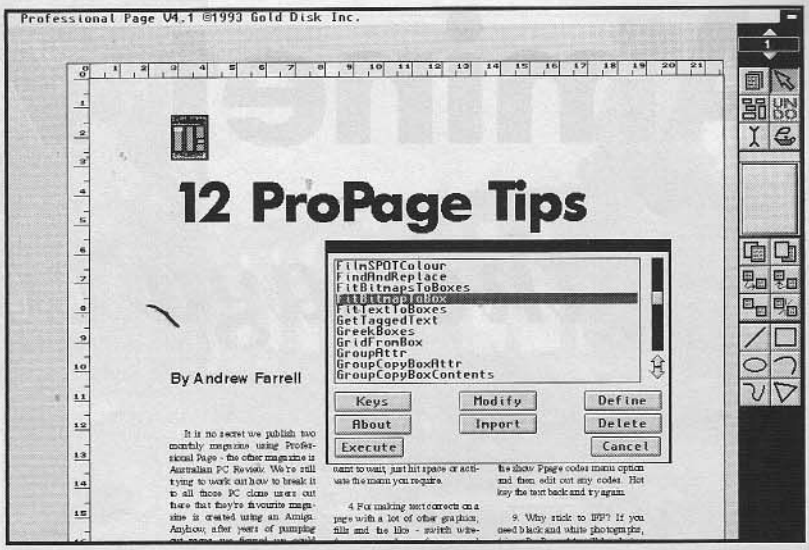


Fig 3

12. If you need your files output to FILM or BROMIDE, use Access Graphics - they have a very souped up Amiga 4000 networked directly to an Imagesetter. The number to call is (02) 550 4499. They accept Amiga disks, Syquest 44, 88 or 270 and modem transfers. ❑

ZIP 100Mb external SCSI removable HD Including 2 free 100Mb disks	$399
Seagate/WD/Quantum/Maxtor IDE harddrives	Call
Quantum 540Mb/730Mb/850Mb SCSI-II	$339/379/419
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SyQuest 270Mb SCSI-II 3.5" removeable	$580
SyQuest 270Mb cartridge	$110
Bernoulli 230Mb SCSI-II removeable + cartridge	$799
SCSI external mini box incl. cable	$150
A1200 Pyramide RCA and 020/28Mhz TRA	Call
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Sony CDU-76s Quad speed SCSI-II CD-ROM drive	$389
Maestro V34 28.8k Fax modem+ GPFax cable	$489
CD32 Paravision SX1	$389
A1200 DKB 1202	$149
A1200 DKB 1202/20Mhz	$189
A1200 DKB Cobra 68030/28Mhz	$269
A1200 DKB Cobra 68030/40Mhz	$399
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A1200 Mongoose/Cobra SCSI-II controller	$175
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CD ROM

Aminet 7

the saga continues

By Daniel Rutter

After all these updates, there's not a lot more I can say about what is uncontestably the premier Amiga freely distributable software collection on CD-ROM. Lots of stuff, up to date, and very easy to access thanks to the best interface in the business. The Aminet discs are now officially coming out every two months, and there's about 650Mb of new software on Aminet 7, which carries an August release date.

Loads of pictures

Every Aminet disc has a focus area, and for this one it's images. You get all the usual new Aminet image uploads, but there are also a load of 24 bit JPGs on various subjects - animals, sports, vehicles, scenery - and more than 8000 high grade black and white IFF clip art images. There's also a large selection of high grade astronomical images - pictures of assorted rockets, tons of Voyager pics, pictures of and from the Hubble Space Telescope and so on.

The clip art covers every category under the sun. Each category's one big archive, and you can view individual images out of it via the usual nicely linked Amigaguide interface.

If you want this to work properly, though - for example, if you want to use the nice PicZoo thumbnail image database - you need Workbench 3, and preferably AGA. I got along on my humble WB2.1 machine by using the PD package ArcHandler, which makes archives behave like directories, making the clip art easy to view without endless archive bashing.

In a first for Aminet discs, you also get some commercial software - a fully functional version of Personal Paint 2.1. This is the 1993 edition, which has NOT been released into the public domain and may NOT be used by anyone who's not bought Aminet 7. There's also a demo version of the current 6.3 incarnation of Personal Paint, which stamps "demo" all over anything you save or print but is otherwise fully functional and an excellent advertisement for Deluxe Paint's premier competitor.

There's also the full version of PPrint, a low-end desktop publishing program, originally commercial, which is deeply mystifying to anyone who doesn't speak its native German. Hey, worth what you pay - about four and a half cents, judging by the proportion of the CD it takes up.

Weird stuff

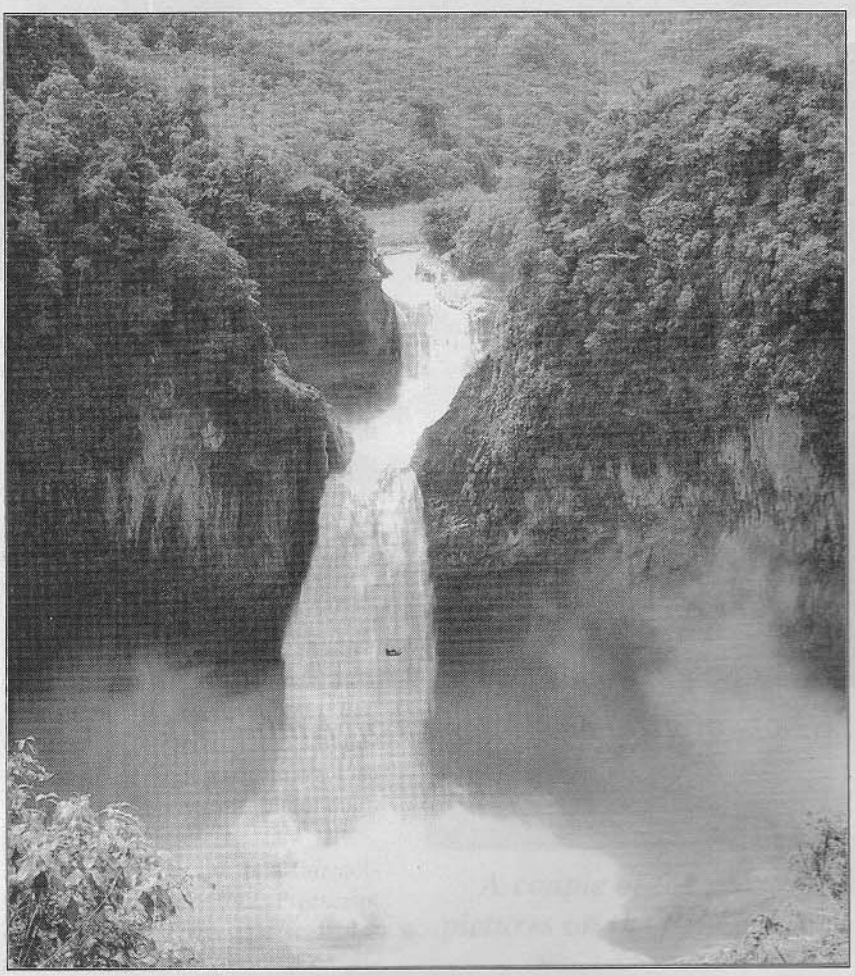
As always, there are some bizarre new inclusions that just go to show what happens when you make a software collection essentially uncensored. To get a file onto Aminet, it just needs to be a non-corrupt archive with no viruses in it and a description file. So while, strictly speaking, Aminet is only for Amiga stuff, theoretically anything can be included.

So you get a series of pictures of some Amiga sysop's hot '68

Camaro dragster, and a load of "silly stories" which are all very badly written and mainly trying to be erotic in some sad twisted schoolboy sort of way. The sexy content consists almost exclusively of putting the word "erotic" in the title, though; if they were being sold commercially, you could do the author for misleading advertising. Have no fear for your children; I know what porn looks like, and this is definitely not it.

One omission that annoyed me are the updates for the Internet Movie Database, which is available in an offline form on the Meeting Pearls 2 CD (and reviewed in the July 1995 issue). Updates to this mighty movie database come out weekly, and they're rather large, and you need them all in sequence for the patches to work. I saw them on Aminet online, but they're so huge that I couldn't be bothered grabbing them, since I can access the Internet Movie Database on the Web anyway. I was looking forward to getting 'em all on this CD, but none of them are there, and there's no explanation why.

Aminet 7's got a pile of pics of interesting places.

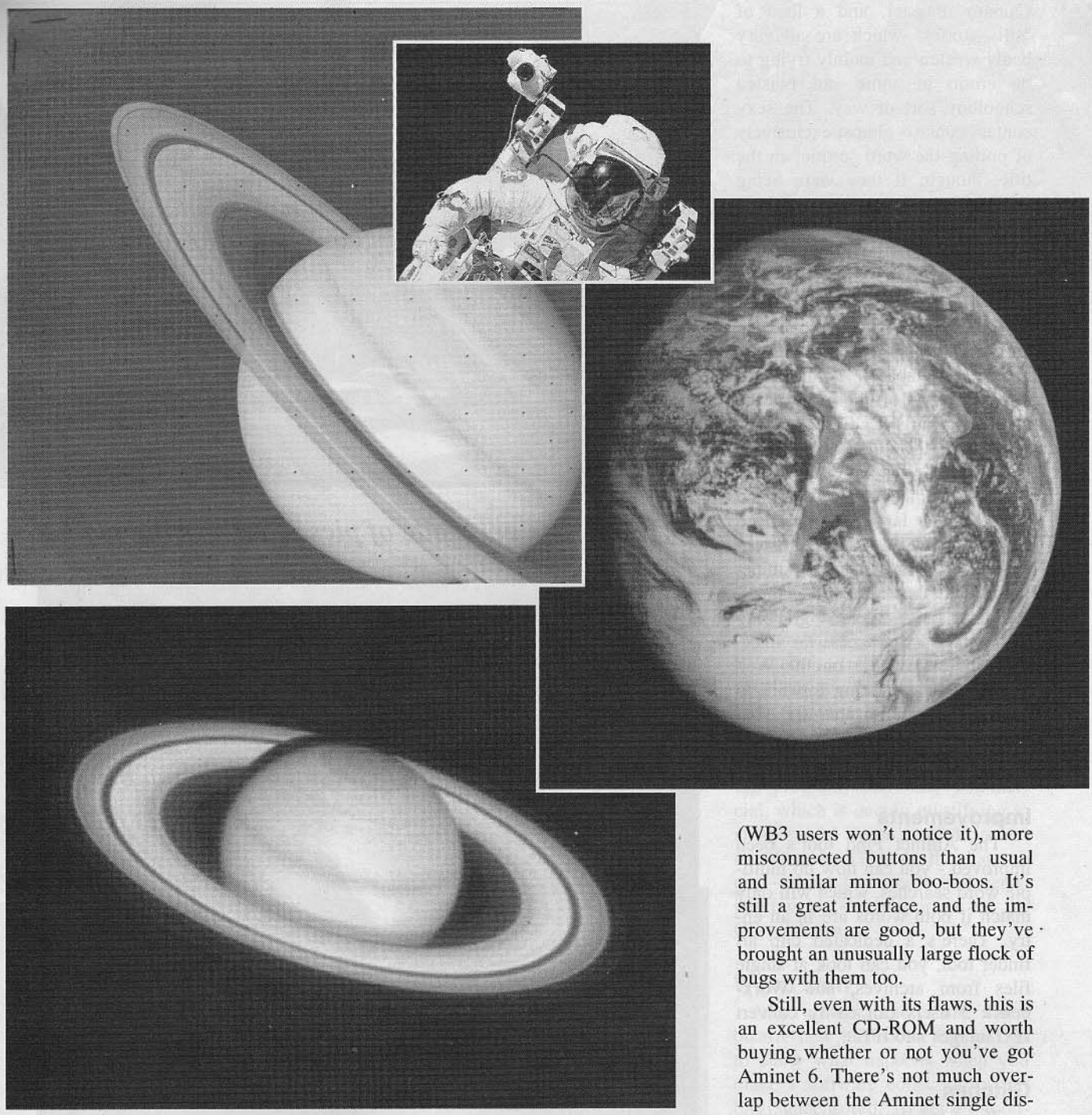


Improvements

The Aminet Find tool's been improved - you can now do multiple word searches, which will only match if both words are in an entry. There's a dedicated clip art finder tool, you can look at single files from archives, and Workbench 3 users can easily convert JPG images into IFF.

Glitches

There are always a few glitches on an Aminet CD, especially in areas like those pesky demos - always tricky to start automatically from an archive. This one's no exception, but Aminet 7 seems to have more than its fair share of problems, with a few Amigaguide glitches on WB2.x machines



Lots of groovy space pics on Aminet 7 too.

(WB3 users won't notice it), more misconnected buttons than usual and similar minor boo-boos. It's still a great interface, and the improvements are good, but they've brought an unusually large flock of bugs with them too.

Still, even with its flaws, this is an excellent CD-ROM and worth buying whether or not you've got Aminet 6. There's not much overlap between the Aminet single discs, and if you keep up with the series you've got just about everything worth having in Amiga freely distributable software. For $35, it's a steal.

CD ROM

Prima

another smorgasbord

The Prima Amiga Shareware Volume 1 CD-ROM is a smorgasbord-disc, like the Meeting Pearls series. There's pictures, programs, animations, sound samples, fonts, you name it, and it's all unarchived, which is bad because you get half as much but good because it's much easier to access the data on the disc with all sorts of programs without eating your hard disk space. Even with all the care in the world, an archive disc like any of the Aminet series will strike problems when auto-extraction software doesn't work with a given oddball program.

Another good thing about smorgasbord discs is that if you don't have much of a CD-ROM collection, one of them'll keep you going for a fair while for not much money. But another bad thing is that they're always killed in any given department by a disc dedicated to that department.

Programs

In the PD department, the Prima disc's blown into the weeds by Aminet, partly because it doesn't have nearly as much stuff, partly because it's harder to find software (there's no nifty universal search facility, just a lumpen file finder), and partly because it's out of date - the newest files are November 1994, and the oldest ones are antiques. Mind you, among those antiques are plenty of Eric Schwartz animations and similar show-off files all Amiga users should have, but if you've already got a collection of old animations from one of the many other discs on which they appear, this will not excite you.

Pictures

The Prima disc has a pile of images on it in HAM, HAM-8 and 24 bit formats, with most of the high-colour images also supplied as low-res HAM renders for users of proletarian Amigas. Low-res lace would have been nice, but you can't have everything. There are a few Photo CD format images, as well, but the high point is a big collection of Earth-from-space images; there are some miscellaneous pics of shuttle launches and heavenly bodies, but most of the pics are of bits of our planet from a long long way up and they're excellent - if you like that sort of thing. This collection actually harly overlaps with the one on Aminet 7; if you get both of them, they complement each other.

Other stuff

There's a reasonable music collection, though nothing like as much as you'll find on Aminet; the collections suffers from not coming with a decent player (just an old version of Multiplayer), and from being misnamed - there are SoundTracker MODs labeled as MED modules and vice versa. Decent filler material, but nothing more.

Less decent filler material is a handful of demos of commercial software, none of it new enough to be particularly interesting. I liked the demo of a model plane simulation package, but everything else was old hat - some of it old enough to be unbuyable.

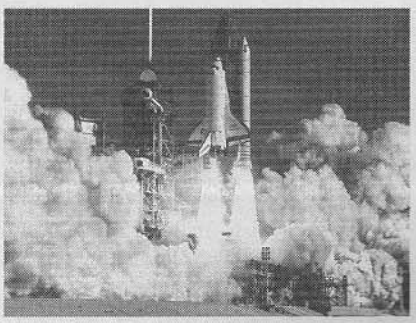
Rescuing the disc is a fair collection of fonts - 742 Postscript ones, 113 Pro Page type scalables and 580-odd IntelliFont CompuGraphic. There are many duplicate fonts in the different formats, but if you're searching for a pretty big spread of scalable fonts, this ain't bad.

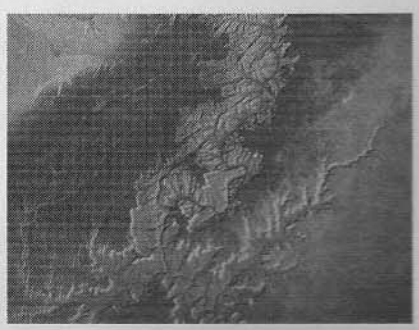
No contest?

Prima is a 570Mb CD-ROM, and it sells for $39. If you're after space pictures, fonts, and a decent collection of not specially new freely distributable software, it's an OK deal. If the Aminet discs didn't exist, I'd recommend it. But Aminet 7, as always, is chock-a-block full at about 650Mb, compressed, or a heck of a lot more uncompressed; it's got more music on it than Prima and a load of space pics of its own, it's easier to access in many cases, and it costs only $35. I know what I'd buy.

Contact Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711 for more information.

❑





A couple of the space pictures on the Prima disc.

CD ROM

Almathera Ten On Ten

Are ten CDs for $89 really a bargain?

By Daniel Rutter

You've probably seen one or another in the series of 5 Foot Ten Packs for IBM compatible machines - 10 CD-ROMs of varying quality at bargain basement prices. It's a concept that's been quite widely imitated, and now there's an Amiga version, which comes from Almathera and gives you 10 Amiga CD-ROM titles for $89. On the face of it, less than $9 a disc looks like a pretty good deal - but is it?

The ten discs come in cardboard sleeves, arranged in a rainbow of colours, and they're all packaged in another cardboard slipcover. Full points for not wasting packing material. They are, in order, Comms & Networking, CDPD 1 and 2, Demo 1, World Vista Atlas, Illustrated Works of Shakespeare, Pandora's CD, Team Yankee, Photo Library and Clipart and Fonts.

Almathera Comms & Networking CD

This first disc contains a load of communications-related software, and some manuals for other discs.

You get the terminal program Terminus, Parnet and Sernet for hooking Amigas up to each other (useful for connecting your CDTV or CD32 to a "real" Amiga), and there are several installs of the 4.0 demo version of AmiTCP, for easy operation on a wide variety of networking systems. There are also

several Amiga Mosaic installs, likewise easy to get going, and one's set up for use with no network, so you can just use it for viewing HTML format hypertext files locally.

There's sundry other software on this disk - text, games, Amiga Report issues up to 3.09, various handy utilities everyone should have and so on.

If you've got a CDTV or CD32, you have to use the Networking CD to load any of the other CDs, because only this first disk has the CD32 boot code on it (to save on licensing fees). Boot with the right mouse button/blue controller pad button down and you're away. On SX-1 equipped CD32s or otherwise CD-bootable machines, this isn't necessary.

CDPD 1

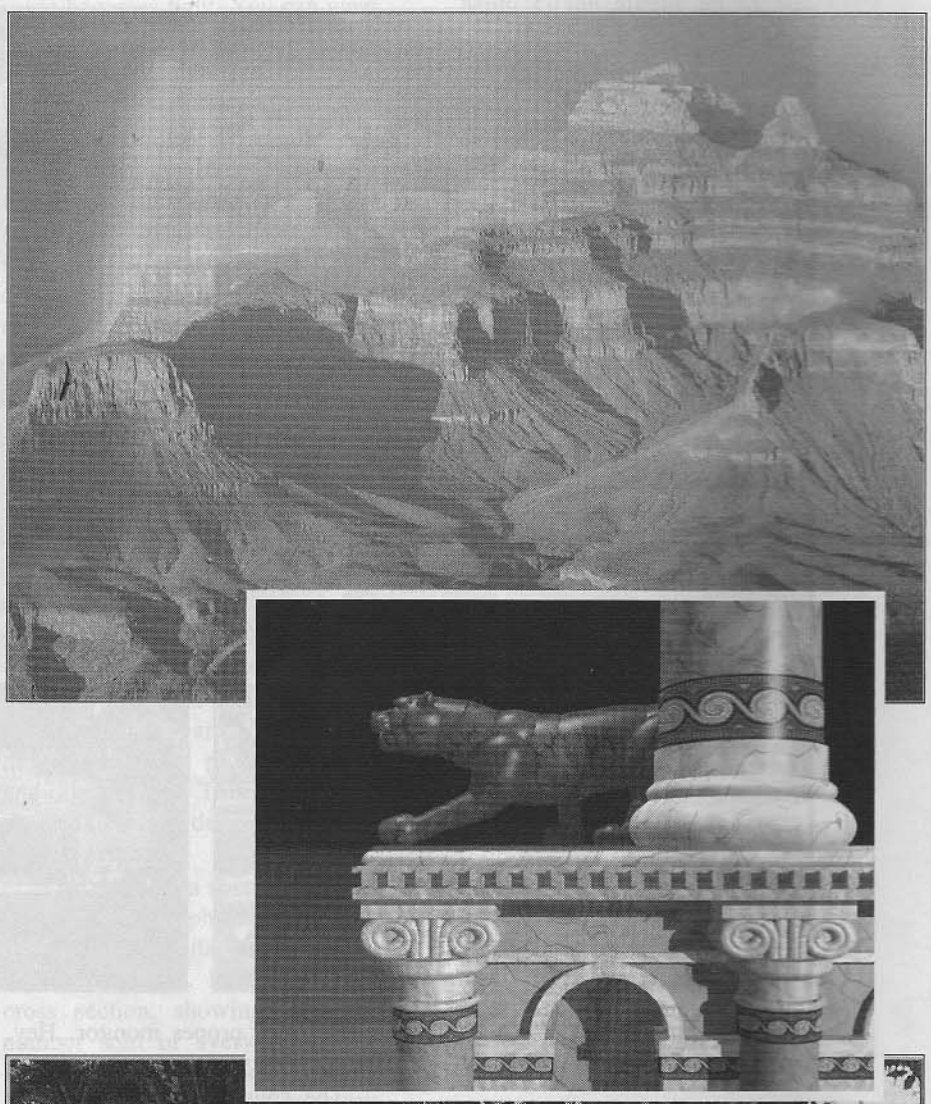
This is the CD that first made Almathera's name - but that was, unfortunately, rather a while ago. It's a freely distributable software compilation, with Fred Fish disks 1-660 and a fair number of elderly MOD music files. You get Kingfisher to browse the Fish and ProTracker and Noiseplayer for the MODs, but nothing can get away from the fact that this disc's as old as the hills.

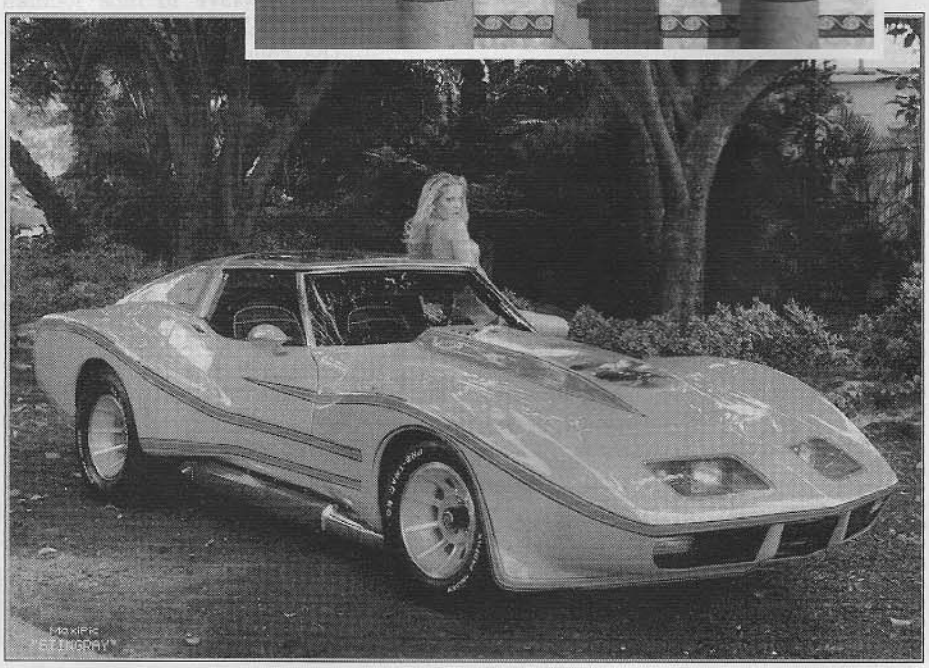
CDPD 2

Predictably, not as old as CDPD 1, but still very old and not very useful. It adds another 100 Fish disks plus 220 disks from the less successful Scope library, plus

Continued from page 43 . . .

Right: *Plenty of cool pics on the Photo Library disc*





150Mb of archives from the old AB20 Internet Amiga software archive, which was eaten up by Aminet lo these many years past, and a bit of other stuff. Historical interest only for the vast bulk of Amiga users.

Demo 1

Demos, demos, demos. And, stunningly, not very new demos either. I tried a half dozen of them, spent ten minutes making a couple of them run, and gave up. If you're interested in antique demos, you probably already have this disc anyway.

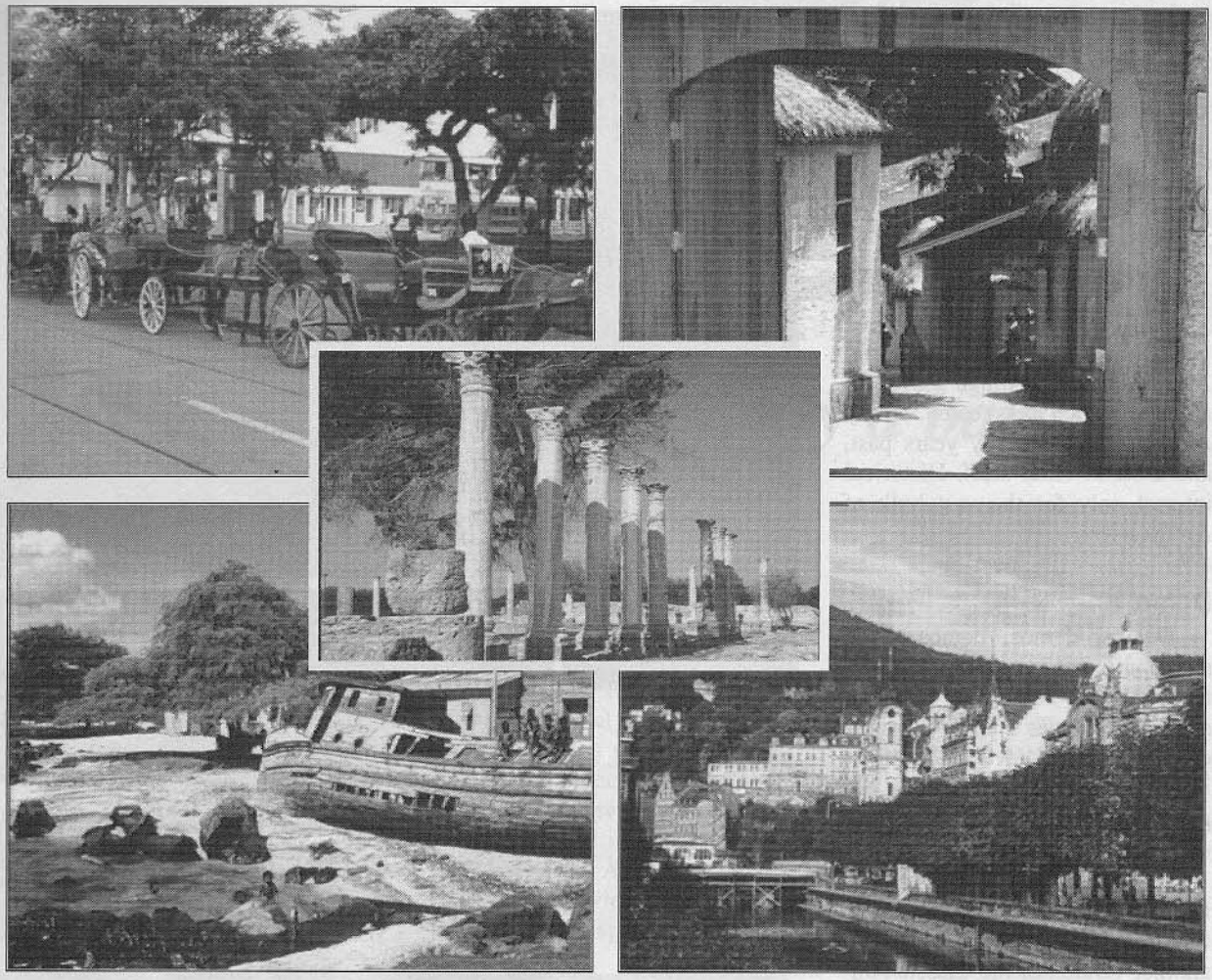
Fortunately, the disc also has a few games of middle vintage, a few fonts and clip art images, and another version of the Classic Animation Collection that so many Amiga CD-ROMs seem to include. If you don't already have a CD with all of the Eric Schwartz animations, the Tobias Richter stuff and similar oldies, this is worthwhile by itself.

There are also a lot of MODs on this disc, which I'd classify as 60% average, 10% good, 30% lousy.

World Vista Atlas

An early and not especially famous CDTV atlas program, World Vista is far from exhaustive but ain't useless either.

The content's not bad, considering what you pay - a load of ugly digitised maps, a load of much better digitised pictures, and quite a lot of sound samples which are



Above: *The World Vista pics aren't bad for their age.*

rather arbitrary in what they represent from each country but are well enough done nonetheless. As well as samples of typical music, you can hear a selection of common phrases in plenty of different languages.

In line with its vintage, all of the pictures are only low res laced HAM6, but they look OK on a composite monitor or TV and tolerable on a proper monitor. Hey, there's plenty of them.

The construction of this package, though, could be better. The interface is generally serviceable but looks predictably CDTV-ish, and if you want to abort that four minute sound sample you just started playing, tough. But all the major components are IFF format, so it's easy to reef them out for use elsewhere. If you poke about on the disc you can find the index files for the cryptically named pictures and sounds, which make it easier to find what you're after. World Vista's age also shows in the country boundaries; as far as this program's concerned, the USSR still exists.

This is no gem, but it's far from useless.

The Illustrated Works of Shakespeare

It's easy to make a good Shakespeare disc. Take the text, which is in the public domain because old Will has been dead for rather more than 50 years, stick it on a disc in ASCII format, add a DOS search program like Scan hooked up to a simple AREXX or C interface, and you've got it.

The idea of computerised reference books is efficiency and power, not atmosphere; if I want atmosphere I'll get the leatherbound Collected Works down off the shelf.

This disc, in my opinion, could have done more by doing less. The interface is written in AMOS and is hence predictably clunky, al-

Continued on page 64...

Contined from page 43 . . .

dow. Transactions can be finalised as cash, cheque, card, account, and layby sales. Account and layby payments are also provided for. You can also do refunds, exchanges, extra charges, staff discounts and petty cash vouchers. A transaction can be put on hold while another customer is being served, then recalled later.

If you don't know the stock code of an item, you can enter a partial code or keyword and Poswiz will list the closest matches: You can also use sub-descriptions, so you can enter, say, "plain black dress" and see a list of all the sizes and variations in stock.

Any transaction line can be changed, and making corrections is easy. You don't need to subtotal before applying a staff or customer discount. The sale total is visible at all times.

You can enter customers as you need while finalising a sale. All transactions are stored in log files. There is a new one each day, making it easy to archive old ones if space becomes tight. You can view the transactions of any date by entering the date and browsing the file.

Marketing Tools

The key to marketing is information, and Poswiz provides it in reports and graphs. Reporting windows allow you to search for any range of the data available, then select what information you want printed. You can create your own reports as you need, or change the sample reports provided.

Different report windows are provided for departments, products, groups, stock, suppliers, customers, orders, invoices, laybys and so on. Almost every type of data can be printed as a report.

You can graph the performance of any stock item week by week over the last year. Not just the number sold, but prices, markups and other details. This graph is also used to set the desired stock levels for ordering.

There is also a special function called Multi Graph. This lets you show any particular value for all records in a file. It works like a cross section, showing, say, the number sold of every item. The idea is to let you spot unusually high or low values and keep an eye on them.

Multi Graph allows up to 10 different values on the same graph, even from totally different sources. You can compare all department sales with all group sales, for example.

Wrap Up

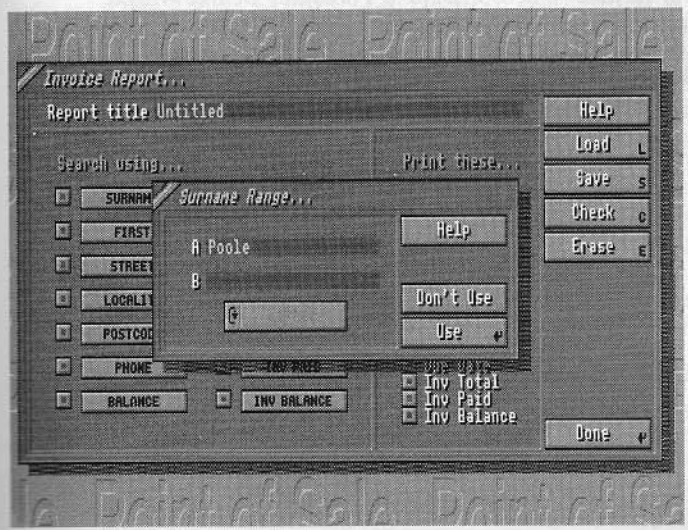
Poswiz's interface is non-standard thanks to it's AMOS design, but it is very pleasant to use. The online help connected to every gadget is excellent. There are several areas where you can customise Poswiz, from changing the colours to setting the format of a receipt. Most settings can be changed to suit your business. You can also design your own receipts.

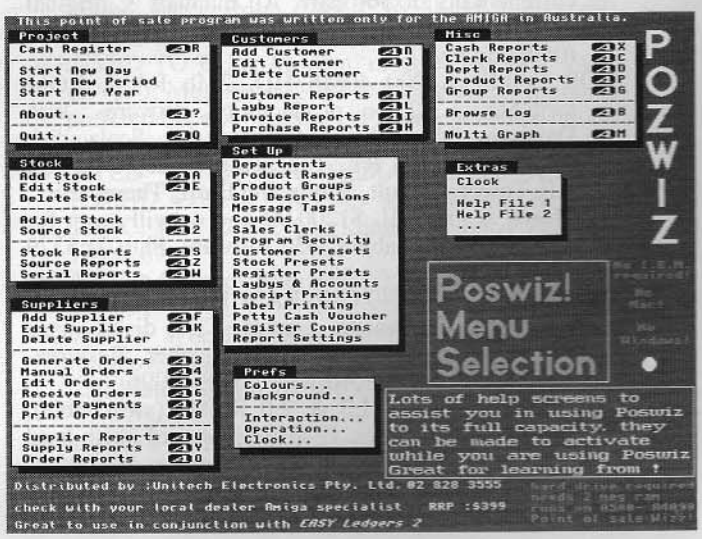
Poswiz works on all the Amigas, including AGA models, with at least 2Mb of RAM and a hard drive. You'll need about 5Mb of free space to store about 2000 stock items. You will also need a printer for receipts. An electronic cash drawer that is controlled and opened via a signal from the joystick port is available to complete your system.

For more information contact Unitech Electronics on (02) 820 3555. RRP is $399.

❑

BELOW LEFT: *The interface is very slick.*
BELOW RIGHT: *A swag of pull down menus!*





FREE Reader Classifieds

A3000 Tower, Warp 40/040, 18Mb RAM 120Mb HD & WB 3.1, $4200. NEC 3x INT. CD-ROM $200, MD100 MPEG card with Scala MM300 $1200, Epson 24 bit flatbed scanner with Adpro 2.5 $1200, EGS 2Mb card with ImageFX EGS $400, GVP IV24 with Pro transcoder $1300, Emplant with 586 chips $500, 570Mb SCSI full height HD $250, GVP DSS 8+ sound sampler $80, 17" flat screen L/R multiscan monitor $700. TEL. Ray AH (02) 99482766 BH (041) 1100341

A500 Workstation case, 1084S monitor, Action Replay Mk3, 2Mb RAM, extra disk drive and a lot of original software plus full version 2.04 upgrade & computer desk - everything in good condition $590. One set of second edition ROM Kernal Manuals $80. Call Matthew. Ph: (076) 355 898

AMIGA 2500, 5Mb RAM, 2FDD, 40Mb HD, 1081 Monitor, Joysticks, flight sim software and games with manuals. $1000 ono. Epson RX-80F/T and 9 pin dot matrix printer. C64 Interface available $150.00, contact Scott on (049) 571 468 (after hours).

AMIGA 500: 1Mb RAM, W.B1.3, colour monitor 1084S, external drive, lots of games and utilities plus manuals VGC $395. Ph: (074) 490 821

AMIGA2000 HD, colour monitor, 2 x 3.5 internal drives, 5Mb RAM, Hardframe HDD SCSI control card, 52Mb, Quantum HDD, AT Bridgeboard, Supra Turbo 28 accel, 3 way ROM sharer with 1.3 & 2.0 ROMs fitted, mouse & mat, joystick and heaps of software & manuals. $1100 ono. Call Brian after 5pm. Ph: 049 725 523

BUY/SELL: Amiga games. Jungle Strike, Robocop 3, $15 ea. Hard disk case $10.00, plus many morel for list write David Doyle 129 Phillip St Waterloo 2017 N.S.W. Also wanted to buy Digita organiser 1.0 or similar, and reasonably price hard disk for A500.

FOR SALE: 500 + W.B 2.1, 1Mb chip RAM. 52M GVP HD/4Mb RAM fitted. A570 CD-ROM drive/12 CDs, extra floppy drive. Phillips 8888-II Col Monitor. All ACAR mags from first issue to current. Lots of Software. All manuals & original packing. Boxes of PD thrown in. $750 firm. Ph: (069) 254 954

FOR SALE: A1200 40Mb HD, 2Mb RAM, ROM switcher 1.3/2.04, productivity sotware- WP, Database, Spreadsheets, Graphics inc. Scala, disk utilities, Vidi 12 RT, Typesmith, Video Director, AB Tower Assault, Bump 'n' Burn, Theme Park, Mortal Kombat II. $1200.00 ono or will swap for CD32, also available CD32 software. Ph (07) 3379 5736

FOR SALE: A1200/40 6Mb RAM 1942 monitor, DOpus 5, Mavis Beacon, Games, CDs, disks, mags and books preferably all sold together. Best reasonable offer phone Adrian (02) 389 6996

FOR SALE: A2000, 1.3 & 2.0 ROMs (switchable), 1084 colour monitor, IBM Bridgeboard (with hard disk and 5.25 floppy), sound digitiser, stacks of original software (including $1800 worth of games in boxes) and more. $550. GVP Series II RAM/SCSI confollor card with 2Mb RAM and a 3.5", 120 Mb Quantum hard disk $450. Or $950 for the LOT. Ph. (02) 797 0072 after 7 PM

FOR SALE: A2000, WB2, ring binder manual, GVP combo - 40MHz EC030, 40MHz '882, 4Mb fast RAM, SCSI controller. 327Mb Quantum Fast SCSI 2 HD (2Mb/sec transfer), 1084S Monitor, 2 FDD, Star NX1000C Printer, 14.4K Simple Fax/Modem. Software (all in boxes with manuals) - Deluxe Video 3, Wordworth 3.1, Civilisation, Day of the Pharaoh, Castles, Elite, Leather Goddesses of Phobos, MegaTraveller 1 & 2, Silent Service, Hunt for Red October, Feudal Lords, Journey, Bards Tale 2. $2000 ono. Phone Jeff (08) 347 3236

FOR SALE: A3000, 105Mb HD, 6Mb RAM, Ext FDD, NEC 3D Multisync Monitor $1900.00. Grey Scale 400dpi Scanner $160.00, Vidi 12 digitiser $120.00, collection of Amiga Format Mag (14-present) $200.00, Huge amounts of software to sell, EVERYTHING MUST GO!! Call me and haggle. Ph (066) 452 722

FOR SALE: A4000/040, interlaced VGA monitor, external speakers, 6Mb memory, 850Mb hard drive, Epson GT 6500 scanner, HP DeskJet+ inkjet printer, TBC+ (with 2Mb Fast RAM fitted), WB3.0, software including: PPaint, Final Writer, AdPro, Migraph OCR, Amigavision, TypeSmith, Amiback + Tools, Art Expression, Pagestream, Aminet 7, Seek & Destroy, Dune II, The Settlers, Shanghai, Tornado, M1 Tank Platoon, all for a meagre sum of $5800. Also Minolta EP2151 Photocopier with auto doc feeder - $2000. Call Richard. Ph (049) 873 940

FOR SALE: A4000/ECO30 with 33MHz coprocessor, 6Mb RAM, 1942 multisync monitor, AMAS audio sampler and MIDI interface, games and music software $2500 ph (049) 293119

FOR SALE: A500 1.3 Wb. 2Mb ADRAM with manuals, ext. floppy drive. $300.00. AMIGA 500 1.3Wb 1Mb (NOT WORKING) $50.00. KURTA graphic tablet nearly new, manuals and disks, $350. A590 populated to 2mb (needs attention) $150. Software: Deluxe Video 3, Deluxe Photolab, Deluxe Music, Digi-paint 3, Digimate 3, AMOS all in original box, the lot $100.00. Ph (02) 331 4004 Eddie

FOR SALE: A500 system, but be quick !!! A500 running at 25MHz with 030 CPU and full MMU, maths co pro (FPU), total 5Mb RAM (including 32 bit RAM) system selectable up to 133Mb RAM, 1084 monitor, fatter Agnus, Super Denise, both soft and hard switchable between OS 2.05 and 1.3, 170Mb Connor SCSI HD, has cost me well over $2800.00, but will sell for $1500.00 ono note the hard drive is full of software from Aminet, cover disks, and PD and shareware. Phone Garry (07) 5534 3883 (Gold Coast)

FOR SALE: A500, 1Mb Chip RAM, PSU, Mouse (not C= make), coverdisks, Virus Checker and PD games: $180 all up. A1200 FastRAM expansion - 68882 socket and 1 SIMM socket (both bare): $85 (paid $200, GRRRR!!), $190 with 2MB SIMM. 5.25" 1.2Mb PC Floppy Drive: $50. Wordworth 2

FREE Reader Classifieds

AGA (all Amigas with 1.5Mb) $40. PC games - Epic (1.44s) $20, Star Crusader (CD) $30. Amiga & PC shareware & PD available: $1 per program, $2.50 for "best of" disks - call for catalogue. Phone Jonathan on (08) 370 9107 after hours.

FOR SALE: A500, 1Mb chip, 4Mb fast, GVP 52Mb & 200Mb HDD, WB 2.1, software incl. Imagine 1, 2 & 3, ImageFX 1 & 2, DPaint 4, Scenery Animator 1 & 4.0 & lots of other paint and 3D programs, Leisure Suit Larry 1 & 5, Dune, Flashback & many more games & PD files, 1084S Monitor, MPS 1000 9 pin printer. $1500 o.n.o Call Dean on (02) 451 5090

FOR SALE: A500, 1Mb RAM, Phillips Monitor, GVP Impact Series II, 9Mb RAM, SCSI Hard Drive, 50 disks. URGENT SALE $600.00 Ph (0411) 190 325 Nigel

FOR SALE: A600 HD, 2Mb RAM, colour monitor, B&W Printer, Heaps of software, disks, AF & ACAR Magazines, $550.00 the lot, Ph 015 630025 (Stephen) or (07) 385 77765.

FOR SALE: AD & D Collectors Set $30. Dragon Strike, Countdown to Doomsday, Pools of Darkness, Secret of Silver Blades. All $25, FA-18 Interceptor, 688 Attack Sub $20 (all boxed & instructions) Hard Nova, Starglider 2, Arcticfox $10ea (originals with instructions & no box). Will swap any 2 for Eye of Beholder 2 and Champs of Krynn. Call Matt. Ph: (068) 422 135

FOR SALE: AMIGA 2000/3000/4000, GVP TBC+; 24 Bit Video Output, Keyer, 24 bit Frame Grabber, Digital TBC, converts NTSC, PAL, SECAM to NTSC, Pal, corrects colour, brightness, contrast, sharpness, PERFECT CONDITION as new still in box $990.00 Ph (066) 761 695

FOR SALE: Amiga 2000: 5Mb RAM (expandable to 9Mb); GVP Impact Series II HC+8 SCSI controller; 2x52Mb HDs; Workbench 1.3/2 (switchable); mouse, keyboard and joystick; heaps of original software including Dpaint, Kindwords, Amigavision etc. all manuals included. $700 ono. Ph (02) 755 3777

FOR SALE: COMPUTER GAMES. Starlord (NEW) $45.00, Frontier Elite 2 $25.00, Settlers $25.00, Robin Hood (Longbow plus hint book) $15.00, Global Effect $10.00, Megatraveller $10.00, Storm Master $7.00, Obitus $5.00, plus some Infocom text adventures $5.00 each. All with manuals. Phone Lyn. (055) 976 543.

FOR SALE: EMPLANT DELUXE Macintosh Emulator $550.00 Retina 24 bit board with 2Mb RAM and version 2.x software $200.00 Ph (bh) 0411 129983

FOR SALE: Excelsior! BBS software v2.0 - Supports RIP Graphics etc. $80.00 ring Michael on (02) 808 2675 or (02) 807 3563 BBS

FOR SALE: Laser Printer NEC Silent Writer $500.00 ono, CD-ROM external NEC still under warranty wih cable, docs and software, $150.00 ono, 386 Bridgeboard to suit Amiga 2000 $500.00 or near offer. Phone Steve (02) 708 4403

FOR SALE: Lots of games and utilities, too many to list. Ph (074) 490 821

FOR SALE: Macintosh ROM sets to suit AMAX etc. $70/set. Call Leslie. Ph (0411) 247 170

FOR SALE: Original AMIGA 1000 Computer, as new with manuals. $200.00 ono.

FOR SALE: Seikshosa colour printer $75.00 ono. Contact Harry on phone/fax (09) 307 3270.

FOR SALE: VIDEO TOASTER 4000 version 3.1 complete package as new. Ideal if going to USA or other NTSC country. $1000.00. Contact Graham Ph (02) 540 2882

KIDS LOGIC (new TAD disk): thinking games for kids, features KidsTiles also new Plumber, Maze, Cards'o'Rama, Puzz etc. All profits to charity. To order, send $6 + $2 postage to Amiga Disks, Technical Aid to Disabled, 67 Launceston St Lyons ACT 2606.

OpalVision 24 bit graphics board as new $500. Rombo Vidi-Amiga 24RT Professional digitiser new - still under guarantee new price $499 sell for $399. DCTV digitising systems - Capture, paint and display images in 24 bit, with RGB Converter (converts DCTV composite to RGB for direct connection to genlock, and allows other Amiga programs to be used without switching cables etc) $450 Call Dennis. Ph (071) 525 022 or fax (071) 525 614

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WANTED TO BUY: 24 Bit Graphics card to suit Amiga 2000. Phone Steve (02) 708 4403

WANTED TO BUY: A2000 power supply required urgently, phone Greg (062) 924 546 at home.

WANTED TO BUY: C64 with 1541 disk drive, user manuals, software, joystick and any other stuff that goes with it. Please ring after 6PM (mon-fri) or daytime on weekends. Ph (06) 255 2369

WANTED TO BUY: CD32, Games, cover disks, hardware, anything, also tech info on SX-1 and any other hardware for CD32. Ph Blade on (07) 282 8145 or (018) 874 704

WANTED TO BUY: Manual (photocopy OK) for AMIGANET V1.4 (a LAN system for Amigas) or contact Address for HYDRA-SYSTEMS, England. Phone Barry Prior (049) 216588 (W) or (049) 486228 (H)

WANTED TO BUY: Modem, must be external, 2400 or 9600. Must be in good working order. Manuals prefered but not necessary. Please phone/fax Jay on (064) 938 432

WANTED TO BUY: SCHEMATICS for AMIGA 1200HD series E. Will pay sensible fee. Write to OEAC, Post Office Clackline WA 6564 Ph. (09) 574 1269.

WANTED: Copy of Blitz Basic 2. Call Paul. Ph: (065) 513 551

WANTED: World class rugby, ET's Rugby League, Rainbow Island games esp. HD installable games. Call Matt with titles. Ph: (068) 422 135

Send your FREE Reader Classifieds to PO BOX 278, Camperdown NSW 2050 or Fax: (02) 565 1220

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- 3D Animation with Aladdin - Easy for beginners - The Animation Workshop - How to beat those disk swapping blues - Deluxe Paint Tutorial - Animating in (apparent) 3D.
- Amos column - Andy's Attic - Exploring WB2 - CanDo - Your own directory utility Part 2 - Education Column - World construction set - Down the Opal mine - Using the Alpha Channel - C64 Column - Hot PD - Games - KGB, Fate - Gates of Dawn, Darkseed, Civilisation, King's Quest Full Solution Part 1.

July 1993 Vol 10 No 7
- Real 3D 2.0 - Accelerators - Golden Gate - Microdeal Clarity - Home Accounts 2 - DPaint - Animation in 3D.
☆ Education - Back to Basics - Amos - CanDo - C64. Andy's Attic - Hot PD - Games - Chaos Engine, Beavers, Sleepwalker - Vikings, Solution to SuperFrog Part 1, Kings Quest 2.

August 1993 Vol 10 No 8
- Show Report - Vidi Amiga 12 - Final Copy II - Sound Digitising - Intro to Desktop Video - Hypercache Professional - Education - Aust Graphics Atlas - CanDo - DPaint Tutorial - C64 Column - Amos Column - Opal Paint's Zap function
☆ Hot PD - Games - Hired Guns, Trolls, Graham Gooch World Class Cricket- Solution to SuperFrog Part 2.

September 1993 Vol 10 No 9
- Art Expression - Paint Program - 68060: the Next Generation - Power Copy Professional - Quarterback Tools Deluxe - CanDo 2.5 Upgrade - DPaint Tutorial - Hot PD.
☆ C64 Column - Amos Column - CanDo - Education - Back to Basics Fractions - Andy's Attic - How to create a RAD drive - Games - Creatures, Flashback, Super Frog, Body Blows, Dark Seed - Solution.

October 1993 Vol 10 No 9
- DPaint AGA - PC Task MSDOS emulation - AmiBack Tools vs Quarterback Tools Deluxe - Personal Paint - Hot PD - Blitz - Andy's Attic - Workbench Tools - DPaint Tutorial.
☆ Education - Learn to play the Piano - CanDo - Make your own Calendar - C64 - Graphics Software - Games - Campo's Int Rugby - Reach for the Skies - Project X Revised Edition, Syndicate, Street Fighter II, Dune II.

November 1993 Vol 10 No 11
- Brilliance - Hoopy Paint - Amiga on the Cheap - A1200 Video Tutorial - CED 3.5 - Frame Machine
☆ Education - Personal Tutor - Blitz - DPaint - HotPD - Latest Fish Disks - CanDo - Amos - C64 - Games - Pinball Fantasies, Desert Strike, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, KGB - Solution Part 1.

December 1993 Vol 10 No 12
- Amiga CD32 - an in depth look - Affordable Tape Backup - SCRAM plus Tamberg - Bernoulli MultiDrive vs SyQuest 105
☆ EGS Spectrum - Education - HotPD - Blitz - more clever functions - C64 - CanDo - Foreign Language file converter
☆ Games - Air Warrior, Two Player Games, 101 PD Games, KGB - Solution Part 2, CD32 Games Pinball Fantasies, Oscar, Diggers.

January 1994 Vol 11 No 1
- Palmtop Computing - low price alternatives to Amiga portable - Final Writer - What the manual doesn't tell you - Deluxe Music 2 - Quicknet - peer to peer network - Understanding Libraries - CanDo - Getting key input - Hot PD - Amos - New extensions for Amos Pro - Blitz - Zones of control - Andy's Attic - C64 Bumper Tips - Games - ACAR PD Games 2, Mean Arenas, Yo Joe!, CD32 Quickshots (D-Generation, Whale's Voyage, Overkill)

February 1994 Vol 11 No 2
- Understanding Genlocks - Final Writer - CoolCat - clipart and animations - Advanced Amiga Analyzer - Upgrading from a 68000 to an A1200 - Dpaint Tutorial - Education - Mathmaster II - HotPD - CanDo - Electronic Log Book
☆ Amos - Hacking AMOS Graphic Modes - Blitz - Main loop for a GUI utility - C64 - Art Gallery - Games - Ishar 2 - Messengers of Doom, Frontier - Elite II, Donk, Soccer Kid, Bob's Bad Day, Flashback - Solution Part I.

March 1994 Vol 11 No 3
- Image processing with Image F/X - A1230 Turbo Plus board - VIDI Amiga 12/24 - Capturing high quality images - GVP's new time base corrector board - Scala MM 300 Synchronous Multimedia - Education - Search for Sanchez - Help Line
☆ DTP Column - Postscript - Hot PD - Fish on ROM - CanDo - Make your own Typing Tutor - Blitz Basic - Data Security - C64 - Online Amiga - Games - Body Blows, Galactic, Zool 2, Alien 3, Lotus Trilogy, FlashBack solution part 2, Deep Force, The Patrician.

April 1994 Vol 11 No 4
- Montage 24 - 24 bit video titling - Warranties and your rights - Where do you stand - How to get Broadcast - Sell your Amiga graphics - Introduction to Internet - World's largest network.
☆ Scenery Animator 4 - Virtual virtual reality - Upgrading Fat Agnus - Education - Fun at Sideshow Alley - Blitz Basic Strings - CanDo - Working with Amiga DOS - DPaint Tutorial.
☆ Hot PD - New Fish, plus Mand2000 - Helpline - Amos - Interfaces without banks - Online - Games you can play on your local BBS - C64 - Useful pokes - Games - Assasin (Amiga Games Pack), Cannon Fodder, Tornado, Stardust, Disposable Hero, CD32 Games - MicroCosm, Fly Harder.

May 1994 Vol 11 No 5
- Understanding Amiga Graphics - Computer images often require a compromise between quality and file size - we explain how to acheive the best balance - Modems - An introduction for Beginners - A modem can bring all kinds of information to your Amiga at a very reasonable cost - Up and Running - Making your modem work - trouble shooting and a checklist of what to do.
☆ Personal Write - super cheap word processing with interesting features - Map Studio Vol 1 - JPEG graphics - DPaint Tute - The DPaint beginners friend - Deluxe Paint Tutorial - The sky's not the limit - Education - Crossword Wizard - Hot PD - Utilities extract more from Workbench - Blitz Basic - Squeezing your Data - Desktop Publishing - Creating Reversed text - Help Line - Problems solved - Online AMIGA! - Start your own MAX'S BBS - C64 Column - CMD picks up GEOS - Games - The Settlers, Second Samurai, Kingmaker - Quest for the Crown, CD32 Games - Trolls, Alien Breed/Quak, Project X.

June 1994 Vol 11 No 6
- Art Department Professional 2.5 - The latest version - The future with AAA, new AAA chips! - DirWork 2 - Amiga Picture Viewers, which is the best - we compare 20 of them - Neptune Genlock, Desktop Video just got better - Amiga Animation Software.
☆ DTP Column, Creating forms in Pro Page - Hot PD - Online Amiga - Blitz Basic - C64 - Games - Liberation - Captive II, Skidmarks, Cliffhanger, Apocalypse, Legacy of Sorasil - CD32 Games, Surf Ninjas, Global Effect.

July 1994 Vol 11 No 7
- Wordworth 3.0 First Impressions - Disk Expander Review - Imagine 3.0 Review - TypeSmith 2.02 - MiGraph MS1200 - Networking Intro - PARNET - PageStream 3.0 - Video Creator CD32
☆ Columns - Hot PD - Amos - CanDo - Arexx - Education - Real 3D - Online - Blitz - DTP Column - C64 - Entertainment, James Pond 3, Noddy's Big Adventure, Dyna Blaster, Mr Nutz - Hoppin' Mad, Star Trek 25th Anniversary

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August 1994 Vol 11 No 8
- Wordworth 3.0 vs Final Writer, Is bigger always better? - Virtual Memory, Good as RAM? Using your hard disk to make up for low memory - TypeSmith Font Design, Convert, edit and create typefaces for your Amiga - Biomechanics, Podiatrists find a use for the Amiga with a video digitiser - Deluxe Paint Tutorial, Creating lifelike textures and animation - Microvitec Monitor, The ideal monitor surfaces at last, perfect for AGA machines - Imagine 3 Tutorial - Animation Column - InfraREXX Control - Software for Little Kids, a suite of programs for little kids.
☆ Columns - HotPD - DTP - Humorous - Online - CanDo - C64 - PowerDOS - AMOS - CD32.
☆ Edutainment - KidPix, painting made fun - Games, K240, Dragon Tiles.

September 1994 Vol 11 No 9
- Stepping up to CD-ROM, review of the NEC 3X triple speed drive - Piracy, Alive and Well - PAL. Lightwave, Newtek's monster 3D rendering package is now available sans Toaster - SX-1 CD32 Expansion - Supra 28 Turbo, Supra 28Mhz 68000 accelerator gives you power without the price - DevCon Report.
☆ Columns - Hot PD - DTP - Online - CanDo - PowerDOS - Amos - CD32 - C Programming - Education.
☆ Games - Armour Geddon II - Fury of the Furries - Brian the Lion - Benefactor - Traps and Treasures.

October 1994 Vol 11 No 10
- A TBC on your desktop? Improve the quality of your next DTV effort - Amiga into the future, what Commodore UK has in store - Fast Animation, no hardware - A2000 revisited - Graphics boards and mode promotion - Personal Animation Recorder - Registering your Shareware - Turn your A1200 into a CD32... almost!
☆ Columns - HotPD - Blitz Basic - Online - Power DOS - C Programming - Games - Nick Faldo's Golf, Pirates, Impossible Mission 2025 "The special edition".

November/December 1994
Vol 11 No 11
- Brilliance 2.0, 24 bit painting without extra hardware - power to the people! - Disaster Recovery, when in trouble or in doubt, run in circles, scream and shout. Or read this. - Quark Express vs PageStream 3.0, How does the new kid on the Amiga DTP block stack up - Money Matters, a cash book for small business and home - G-Lock, GVP's software controlled genlock - Understanding Fonts - CD Roundup - Easy Ledgers, professional accounting.
☆ Columns - Blitz Basic - Online - AMOS - C64 C Programming - Games - JetStrike - Secrets of Frontier Elite Hintbook. Review of the Competition Pro Super CD32 Controller.

SPECIAL EDITION ANNUAL
January 95 Vol 12 No 1
- Lightwave Goodies, extra software finally in Australia - CEI Conference, hot from the Internet CEI boss Alex Amor speaks - Removeable storage shootout, comparision of Bernoulli and Fujitsu 230Mb drives - Magic Lantern - Surf the Net, Internet access with your Amiga.
☆ ANNUAL SPECIAL - Amiga Dealer List - Amiga Service Centre List - Amiga BBS Listing - Fish Listing
☆ Columns - Online, DPaint, C64 - Games - Super StarDust Alien Breed Tower Assault, Cannon Fodder 2, Beau Jolly Pack including Cannon Fodder, The Chaos Engine, The Settlers, and T2: The Arcade Game. CD32 Banshee.

February 1995 Vol 12 No 2
- Amiga digital video, full digital video editing. - Workbench 3.1, latest version reviewed - PC-Task , Windows capable Amiga for $129 - Deluxe Paint 5, a sneak preview - Personal Paint 6.0, and the Cloanto competitor! - CEI Conference II, Alex Amor speaks again!
☆ Dealer List update - Corrections and extensions to the January listing.
☆ Service Centre List - More corrections and extensions.
☆ Columns - Online - C64 - Hot PD - Demo Scene - AMOS - Blitz Basic - Power Amiga DOS
Games - Rocketz - Mr Blobby - The Clue! - Top Gear 2 - Marvins Marvellous Adventure - Rise of the Robots -

March 1995 Vol 12 No 3
- Datastore, a new wave in databases - Real 3D versus Lightwave, both compared - Internet, Cool places on the Web - Aura Interactor - A570, Fitting a SCSI hard disk to the A570 CD-ROM - Wordworth 3.1 - CanDo 3.0, New Version - XCAD 3000, Professional CAD on the Amiga - Commodore Deathbed Vigil and A1200 Intro 2 reviewed. - Insight Dinosaurs, Insight Technology.
☆ User Group Listing
☆ Columns - Help Line - Hot PD - Online - AMOS - Blitz Basic - C64 - Demo Scene
☆ Games - Theme Park - Soccer kid - Subwar 2050 - X-it

April 1995 Vol 12 No 4
-Getting onto the internet - Using bones in imagine, powerful animation tools - Photogenics, the creative alternative to ADPro - Studio II, the real man's printer driver - IOQ, Is accounting package up to scratch - CAM CD, how good is CAM-CD - Pyramid Mouse Master
☆ Professional Amiga audio, sunrize plus Bars and Pipes - AmigaDOS tuition - Final Writer Update - Black Computers Faster.
☆ Columns - Help Line - Education - C64 - Blitz Basic - Online - Hot PD - Demo Scene
☆ Games - Base Jumbers - Sensible World of Soccer - Fifa International Soccer

May 1995 Vol 12 No 5
- Boot CD32/CDTV disc on your Amiga, what's new in CD-ROMs - Squirrel SCSI Interface for your A1200 - Directory Opus 5 - PC Task 3.1 - Essence and Forge, roll your own multimedia - Get organised with Digita Organiser - ZedREXX Simple GUI creation - The final word - A different view of Databases.
☆ 1995 Reader Survey
☆ Columns - Hot PD - Help Line - Editorial - Online - Art Gallery - Media Watch
☆ Games - Pinball illusions - All terrain racing - Jungle Strike - Enemy Unknown.

June 1995 Vol 12 No 6
- ADPro, ImageFX and Imagemaster, how do they stack up? - Whats new in modems - The Amiga reborn, Escoms buyout and their plans - SLIP Internet access - Do it yourself home control - First look at home control - Meeting Pearls 2 - Australian Geographic Encyclopedia.
☆ Columns - Help Line - C64 - Blitz - Online - HotPD - Demo Scene
☆ Games - Aladdin - Kingpin Bowling = The Lion King
☆ AMIGA Specialists List

July 1995 Vol 12 No 7
- The NEW Amiga, ESCOM's plans to take shape - Budget A1200 Accelerators - Iomega Zip Drive, the drive that'll kill the SyQuest - AMAX IV - OS 3.1 and graphics boards - Aminet 6, the best gets better - Turbocalc 2.0 - The Internet Movie Database - How to use gradients - Photogenics 1.2 - Nureality Vivid 3D Plus
☆ Columns - Help Line, Online, Hot PD, AMOS
☆ Games - Dawn Patrol
☆ AMIGA Specialists list

August 1995 Vol 12 No 8
- Cyberstorm 68060, the fastest Amiga ever! - Shapeshifter MAC emulation - ASIMCDFS v3 - Directory Opus 5.11 upgrade - Wordworth tutorial - Storage Wars - Trivial Pursuit
☆ Columns - Help Line - Hot PD - C64 - Working Workbench - Online - AMOS Art Gallery - Media Watch
☆ AMIGA Specialists list

$3.50 each inc. pp. Send cheque or money order, or phone/fax credit number to: Storm Front Studios, PO Box 278, Camperdown NSW 2050. Phone: (02) 557 4266 Fax: (02) 565 1220.

... continued from page 56

though to its credit it does let you search for words or phrases in one or several works. And the pictures, mono scans of period engravings, don't annoy you much. And in a small font on a decent screen you can actually see quite a lot of whatever you're looking at at once. And I can even forgive the title of The Tragedy Of Julius Caesar being spelled "Caeser". The text is actually in ASCII format on the disk (PC ASCII carriage return/line feed line ends, but I'll let that pass), although unfortunately carved up into teeny tiny scene-sized bits - the interface doesn't let you scroll smoothly through a play or sonnet, you have to hop to the next scene, and then, maybe only three lines later, hop again.

Inelegant, but maybe worth $9. Maybe.

Pandora's CD

Ah, yes. The dog. Every CD collection has a dog in there somewhere, and here it is. This is a CDTV demo/promotional disc, which plugs the CDTV with a load of dated animation and dodgy pictures, and also tries to sell products made by a company called Optonica that you can't buy any more. A coaster.

Team Yankee

This is not actually a CD game. It is a floppy game, put onto CD. 99% of this disc is empty.

That said, Team Yankee's still not bad, although it's been around a few years now. You control tanks, 3-D vector environment, kill the Russkies, rah rah rah. It's not really a realistic simulator experience, but for $9 it's OK.

Almathera Photo Library CD

This is more like it. 530Mb of 256 colour, HAM8 and 24 bit pictures, in various categories, and with quality levels usually ranging from good to excellent. There are some frankly lousy pics in there, a few are corrupt and some are duplicated - but there are enough others for the disc still to be perfectly

usable. There's a slab of piccies which show off Photogenics' range of effects and a usable demo of Photogenics (which, coincidentally, Almathera also make), but there's plenty of plain old pictures in plenty of categories nonetheless. If you're after a pile of sample pictures to play with in your image editing package, or whatever, this is a great source.

There are 86 Photo CD format images on the disc, which are NOT in a directory with the right name and do NOT have the right support files and so can NOT be viewed by anything other than a Photo CD loader for an image processing package, or similar. I wouldn't be so annoyed about this, if it weren't for the fact that the latest version of the excellent AsimCDFS makes Photo CD handling a complete doddle, translating them on the fly so they look like 24 bit IFFs to any viewing program - but only if the disc they're on is pretty close to the proper Photo CD format. And some genius compiling the disc set them all up to view with ViewTek, which does NOT support Photo CD files. Yay team.

Almathera Clipart and Fonts CD

This disc's about a third full, but you still get a pile of stuff.

There are more than 6500 black and white clip art images - again, some are crud and some are repeated, but so it goes with PD clip art collections.

You also get better than a thousand fonts, about three quarters bitmapped, and the rest mainly Postscript, with 88 CompuGraphic thrown in. After testing every single one of them, I can report that I am lying and looked at a few. The ones I looked at were OK.

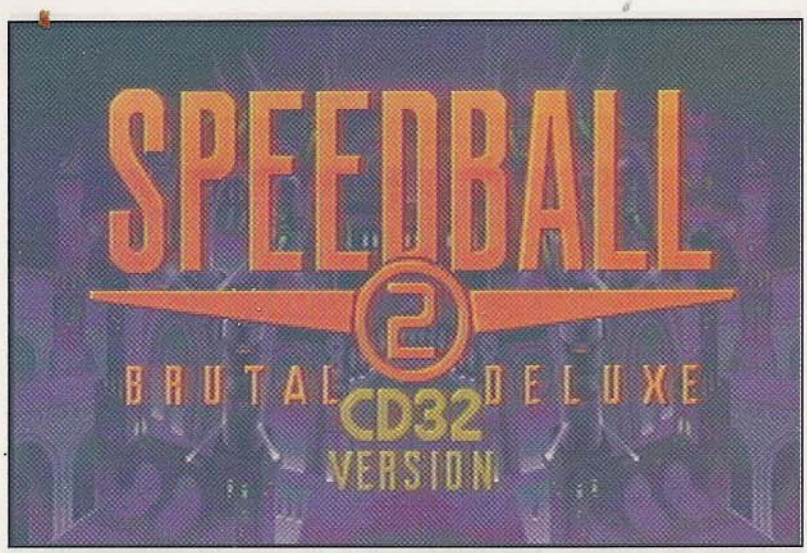
Overall

Before you even think of getting this package, if you've got a regular Amiga with a CD-ROM drive and not a CDTV or CD32, get yourself CD-Boot. This package will allow you to start all the disks in the pack that really want to be running on a CDTV, and hence contain hardcoded references to the CD-ROM drive being called CD0 and plenty of other special features to stop them working without Great Mucking About on a regular Amiga. I got them working, but I didn't enjoy it at all. Get CD-Boot. You know it makes sense. Ad concludes.

This collection is not a carefully planned, cohesive whole. It's three new disks and seven oldies, repackaged and tweaked a bit. For your $89 you get the excellent Networking disc, the quite good Photo Library, the OK Clipart and Fonts, the average Team Yankee, World Vista and Shakespeare, the ancient CDPDs and Demo disc and the useless Pandora's. I can't recommend this pack to everyone, but given that you're paying the price of about two and a half Aminet discs, it's worth thinking about. Check it out.

Contact Don Quixote (076) 391 578. $89.

❑

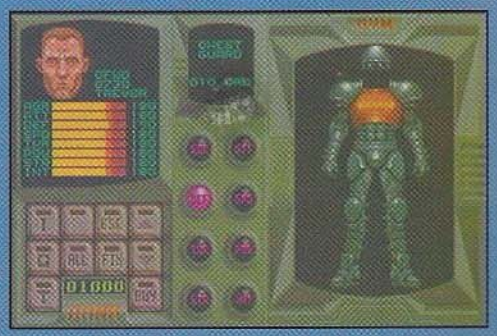


Here's a blast from the past. Remember Speedball II? Back in 1991, it was THE Amiga sports game; forget your soccer, or golf, or darts; computer game sports meant big nasty cybernetically enhanced blokes in armour charging frantically around an ironclad field, pounding each other witless and trying to slam a steel ball into the other side's goal.

Pinball-style bonus gadgets, lots of things to pick up including cash to beef up your guys, a bit of strategy (pass to the big bloke and take cover), superfast gameplay and the chance to go up against your friends; no wonder it sold like hot cakes. Speedball II's joined the Amiga gaming hall of fame, along with other deathless classics like Marble Madness, Arkanoid and F/A 18 Interceptor. Hey, any game that gives you a goal for getting an enemy player stretchered off is all right with me.

Well, all these many years later (well, four of 'em anyway), Speedball II has finally made it to the CD32. And the Bitmap Brothers, sensibly in my view, have hardly changed it at all. The graphics are a bit smoother - though still not full PAL size - and the sound's enhanced too, but the game plays exactly the same. A case could be made for abandoning the old one-button control system and, say, making one button throw the ball low and one throw high - but getting that low-throw tap right is a skill that kids today should learn. If you want to get good, though, I hope you can use a gamepad VERY accurately; get yourself a good one button joystick or two, otherwise - you'll humiliate your friends much more effectively with a stick, and that's what it's all about, after all.

This game was, and is, excellent. If you've already got it for your old ECS Amiga, then don't bother with this version; in a dim light you couldn't tell the difference, thanks to the superlative quality of the original version's visuals. But if you've missed the Speedball II experience and think your reflexes are up to it, it comes highly recommended. For $49, you really can't do better. Do yourself a favour, and all that.



Speedball 2
Available from Amiga software dealers. $49 for CD32 and AGA disk versions. Contact Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711 for more info.

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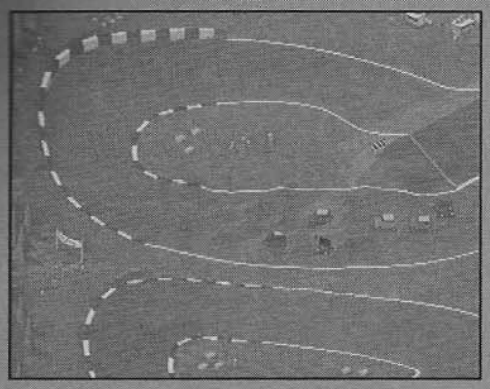
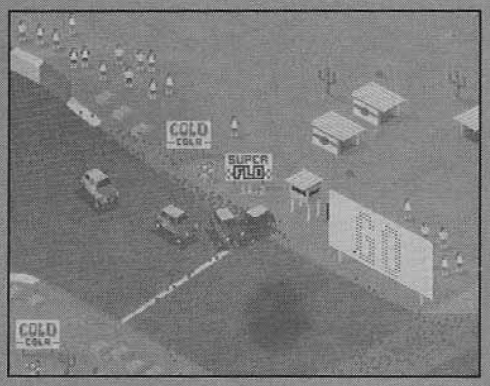
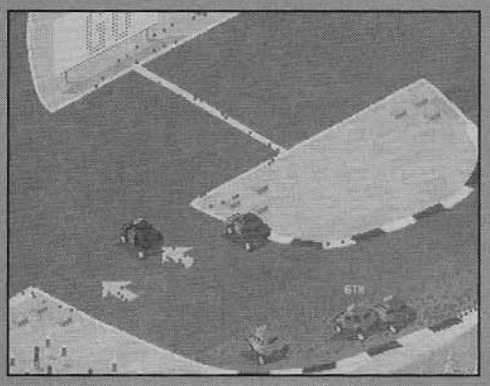
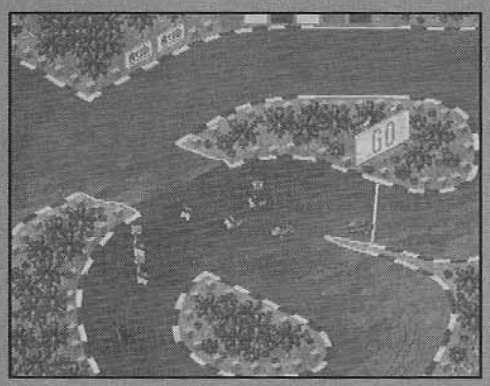








It had to happen. You don't come up with a cult-following game like Skidmarks and just leave it at that. If they can make three Die Hards, there's certainly room for more than one Skidmarks.

If you missed it last time, Skidmarks is a minimally realistic but maximally entertaining isometric-projection screen-scrolling overhead view race game, in which little cars of various designs skid, slam and bounce their way around a selection of tracks. It's all been done before, of course, but never as niftily, and New Zealand-based Acid Software have done rather well for themselves out of Skidmarks.

Super Skidmarks adds a number of new features. For a start, there are plenty more car designs, including such classics as the police van and the cow (yes, you read that right). You also get detailed instructions on rendering your own cars in Imagine. The cars are just cosmetic, though; they all handle the same.

But you can change car performance, quite startlingly. If the "classic" cars are too speedy for your liking, you can downgrade everyone to pedal cars, which can't manage a skid on any corner and actually let even lousy drivers win, because the computer drivers don't know how to handle gutless vehicles. But speed freaks out there will be much happier with the several grades of faster cars, whose engine notes suggest 20,000 RPM redlines and whose performance from jumps must be seen to be believed. Very tricky to control, but that's half the fun.

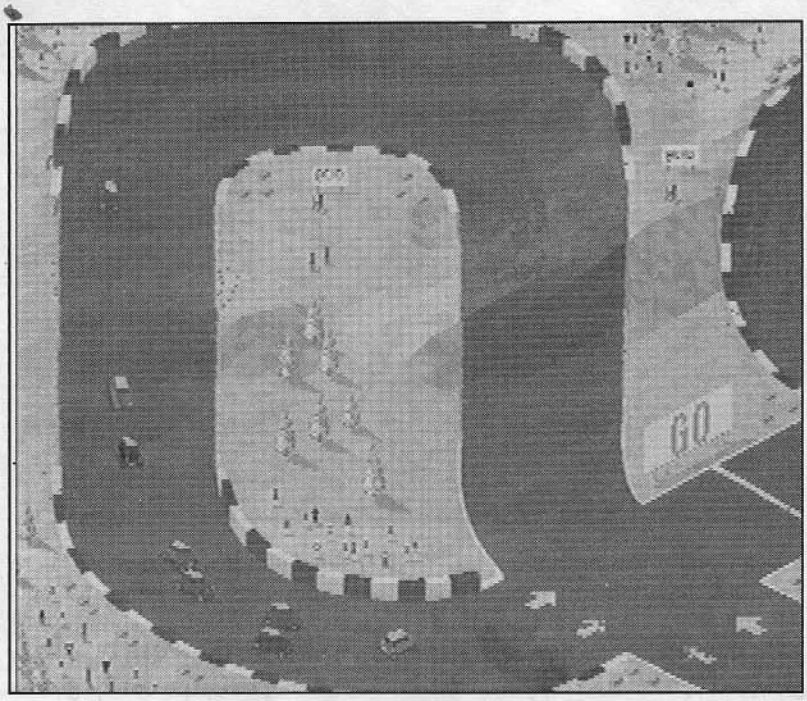
There are 12 new tracks, and you can use the original 12 as well.

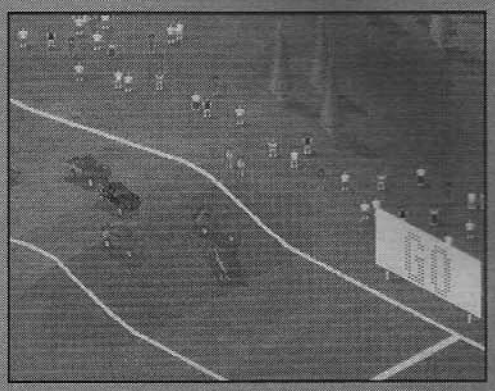
Owners of AGA machines can now have up to eight cars racing at once, and even play in high res mode and see four times as much play area. Up to four people can race together on a shared screen, via two sticks and keyboard controls or the more elegant four player joystick adaptor (not included - but instructions to make one are). The computer drivers are smarter, too - but still not exactly geniuses.

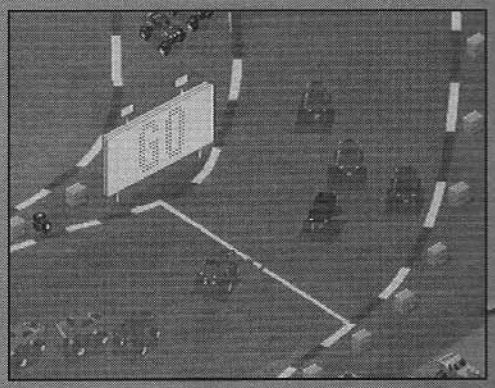
There's also now a triple split screen mode, so three people can play one one machine without being annoyed by averaged screen locations.

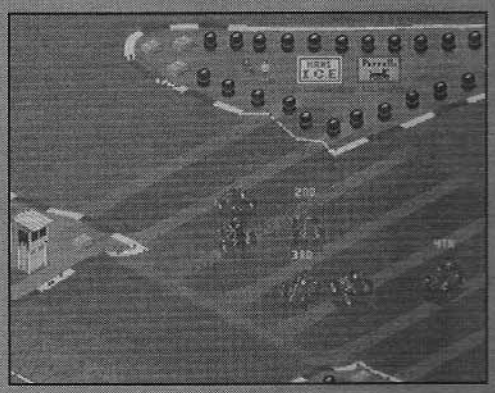
Or you can use the improved communications support; race over the phone line or null modem cable!

One option that I'm surprised wasn't included before is caravan towing. This halves the number of





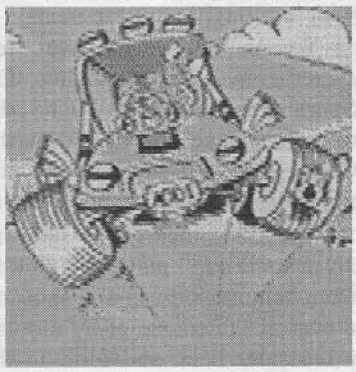




possible simultaneous vehicles, and attaches a reversed repeat of your vehicle to the towbar you never knew you had until now, and the "caravan" flaps and jackknifes as you'd expect it to. Now all they need is a Portaloo-towing race and the game will be complete.

Until that day, Super Skidmarks is where it's at in fun to play, thoroughly unrealistic race games. Brilliant fun.

❑



Super Skidmarks

Available from Amiga software dealers. $69 for CD32, $49 for ECS disk version.
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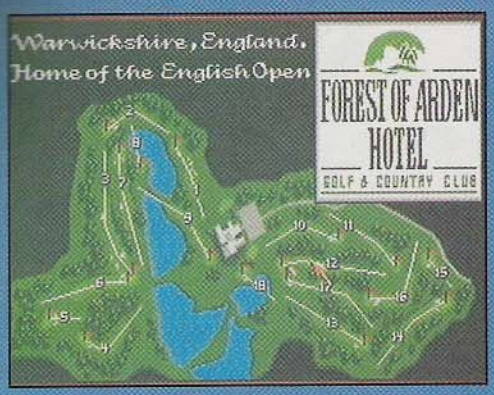
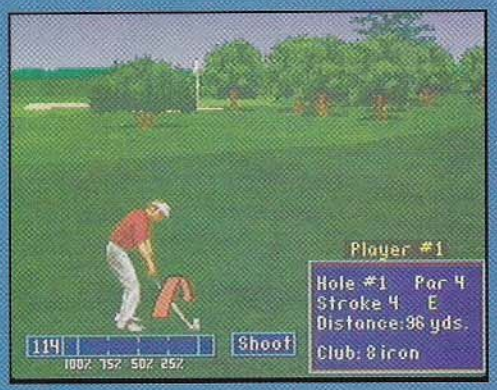
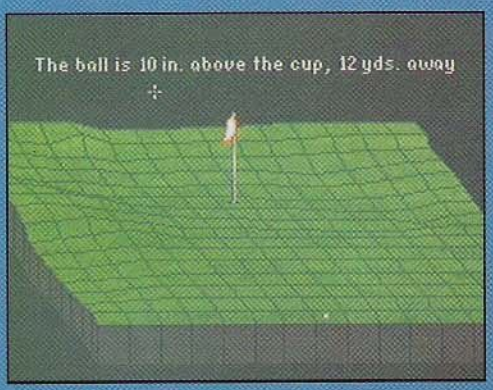
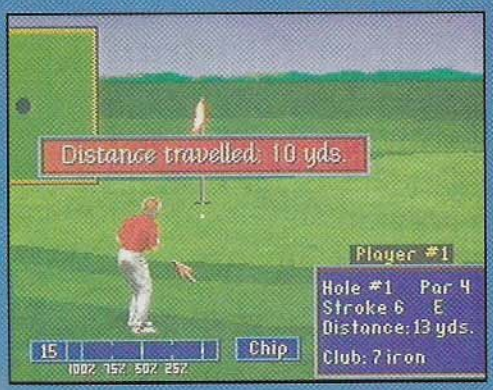
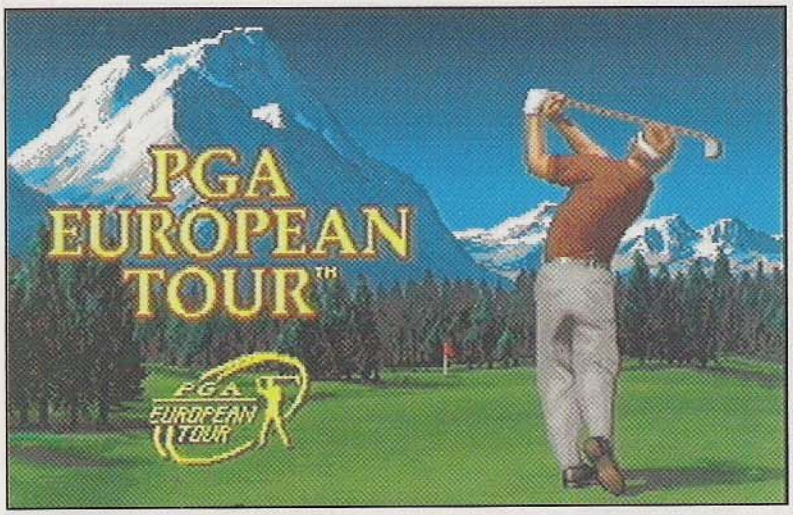










I can't help getting the impression that the standard project for the end of the Game Programming 101 course is the writing of a golf game. There's so many of the blighters. The PC world's riddled with 'em.

We on the Amiga have been spared much of the glut; EA Sports' PGA European Tour is the only golf game I've played on the CD32. And as these games go, it's not bad at all.

The basic idea is the same as always. Your player's viewed from behind, you can aim shots on a map of the course or by moving a crosshair back and forth in the normal view, you can pick clubs and even change your stance. Taking the shot is via the time-honoured moving bar method; click to start the bar moving, click to set power, click to achieve (or avoid) hook and slice. If you do a shot of decent length the view cuts away to let you see the ball approaching its target as well as speeding away from you. If you get this game for your CD32, make sure you've also got a mouse; you can't control it without one.

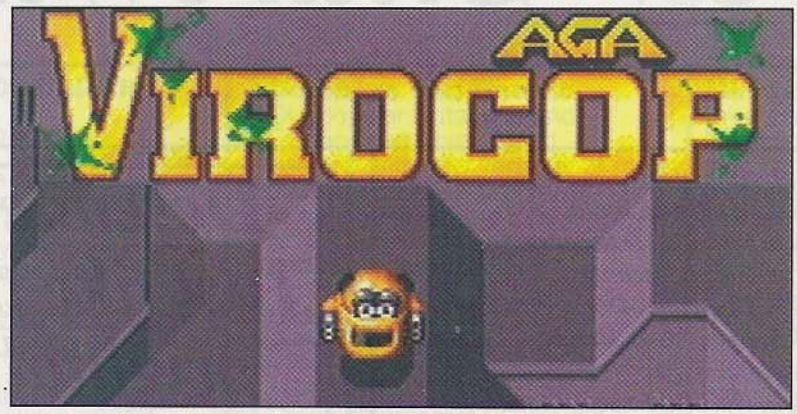
There are lots of options. You can play practice, tournament, skins, Canon shoot-outs or regular matches against other humans or 60 simulated PGA tour pros. There are prodigious and generally embarrassing statistics about your performance. There's ball lie, hints from the pros, contoured greens and five PGA tour courses, faithfully reproduced.

If you're after a golf game for the CD32, this is the one to get. Sure, it's formula stuff, but it's competently executed, well documented and plays well. The graphics and animation aren't amazing but they're not ugly either and there aren't any faux pas like nearby trees turning to Lego. The sound's very sparse, but I can't say that bothers me much.

There's not much on the CD - the CD32 version's the same as the AGA disk one - and I haven't checked out the ECS disk version. But who needs monster CD animations or other trimmings? Good gameplay makes up for it. If you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you'll like.

PGA European Tour

Available from Amiga software dealers; $69 each for AGA, CD32 and ECS versions. Contact Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711 for more information.



There are a number of components to OK games that just get mixed up and repackaged over and over again. There's nothing wrong with the result - done well, it can be excellent - but if you're after something refreshingly original you'll be disappointed.

Virocop is a game from this mix-and-match genre, but having said that I must admit it's rather good.

There is, of course, an irrelevant storyline, but what it boils down to is that you're a cute little golden robot thingy with a wide variety of cute but nasty weapons and you cruise around various semi-3D levels blasting things.

The bad guys are mainly cute, except for the green and squishy viruses, which are what you have to kill before you can go to the next level. Killing the other bad guys is optional, but if you do you get extra energy-stuff, which you can use to buy new weapons via a slightly overcomplicated but usable enough inter-level circuit board screen.

There are 20 special weapons plus an invulnerability gadget, and they all have an energy cost appropriate to their beefiness. Many have limited ammo, some don't. You can kit yourself out with any three available weapons for each level, and you can also pick up extras during the level.

There are two slightly-original features to Virocop. The levels are laid out snakes-and-ladders style - you climb upwards as you play via ramps and jumps, but a slip can send you off an edge and subsequent panic will often land you back at the beginning. Fortunately there's no time limit, so falling back is just annoying, not fatal (unless you've left a load of baddies unkilled...).

The other unusual feature is the robot control. As well as simple point and shoot cruising, you can use two joysticks and have one person steering the body and another aiming and firing the independently targetable gun - or one ambidextrous show-off doing both.

This is not a Revolution In Computer Gaming. It's not the One Game You Must Buy This Year. But it's well made, and challenging, and fun. The graphics are clear and cheerful, the sound's OK, it plays smoothly, it's hard disk installable and you can even involve a friend. Worth having.

❑

Virocop
Available from Amiga software dealers. AGA and ECS Amiga versions both $69. Contact Amadeus Computers on (02) 651 1711 for more information.

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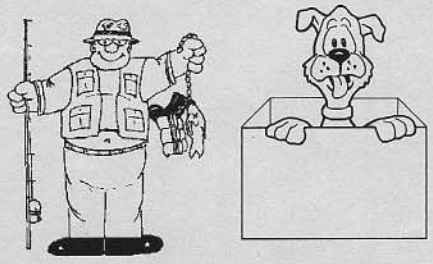

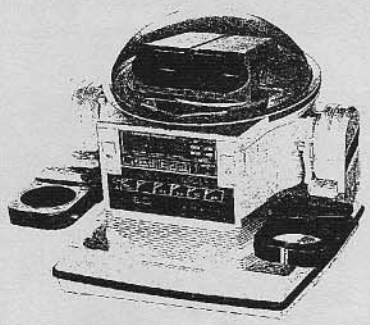

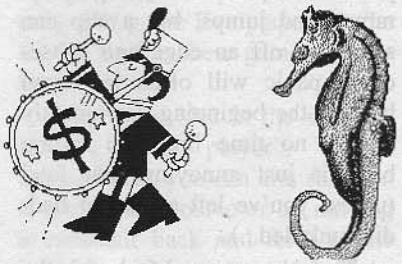

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Digital gee-gees

Describing this as a "spotting" is probably going too far, because we found it out in conversation with a bloke who works at Structured Data Systems. This company has produced a horse racing game, based on an A4000 with a cranked 68040 and extra graphics boards. The simulated races look very real - and the money wagered on them by punters looks completely real, because it is. Expect to see it at a club or cruise ship near you soon.

Alternative viewing

Stuart Brightwell of Wendouree, Vic, spotted a few of our beloved computers. He sighted an SBS documentary on neo-Nazis who, among other activities, edited propaganda films with an A2000 - but we've had that sighting before. Sill on SBS, an Hungarian film called "Game Over" featured the main character using an A500 with DPaint III to make animations for a game he was writing - and we've had that one, too.

Further emphasising his cosmopolitan taste in entertainment, though, Stuart also spotted a C64 receiving weather reports in the acclaimed French flick "Three Colours: Red".

Boom!

Michael Harrold, who has graced these pages before, e-mailed us from someone else's account (oo-er) with three sightings and a heartfelt plea for a free subscription, not on grounds of poverty but to save him the loss of Amiga Review reading time due to having to go to the newsagent and buy the mag. Novel, but not novel enough, because two of his sightings were ones we've had before - the state of the art A500 on Healthy Wealthy and Wise running Kindwords, and the Lucas With The Lid Off video clip. The other one's nearly bizarre enough to make it on its own, though - Channel 9 news, 20th of July, A500 blown up, reason? Immolated possum on nearby power lines.

Whinge, whinge, whinge ...

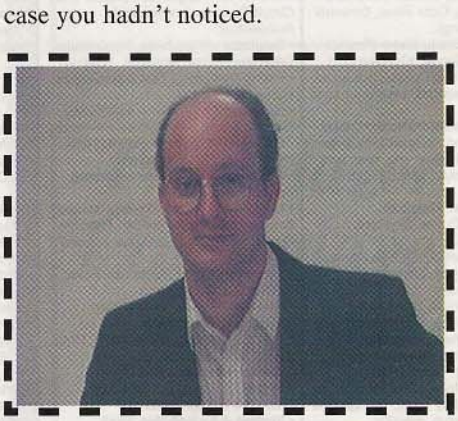
Joshua Pryor e-mailed us with news of a 1084S in use in a doctor/scientist's office in "Seduction", and an A500 on the front of a home insurance pamphlet - although he couldn't remember the company. He then complained about the amount of stuff he'd sent in for no reward, and we'd have to agree - yes, Josh, life stinks sometimes, doesn't it?

Megaband uses Amiga!

Lazaros Papavasiliou is the first to tell us about the first track on the first CD of Pink Floyd's latest, "P.U.L.S.E.", which features the distinctive tones of an Amiga saying "For millions of years-/Mankind lived just like the animals/Then something happened which unleashed the power of our imagination/We learned to talk." Apparently the Amiga has a bit more to say later in the track. This isn't a bad one, and his subscription beg was noticeable without being embarrassing, but unfortunately this next spotting came along too.

Farrell ring-in

Keith Connor of Southbank, Vic, did not spot an Amiga at all. What he did spot, in the credits for Beyond 2000, was the name of an associate producer - Andrew Farrell. We hasten to reassure our readers that unless he owns a device that gives one an extra 16 hours in each day and keeps an adrenalin drip in his hip pocket, this is not THE Andrew Farrell, distinguished editor and proprietor of this magazine. Keith did a big suck for a free sub despite not having actually fulfilled the terms of the contract, so out of sheer perversity we're going to give him one, just to annoy the rest of you. We're in this for the power trip, in case you hadn't noticed.



Two cut-out-and-keep pictures of the one true Andrew Farrell, for easy identification of fakes.

Continued from page 21 . . .

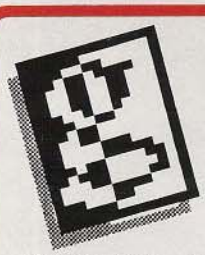
We feel the clear meaning of these statements is that the Lascelles software is not very good, and that it seems roughly on a par with the (similarly not very good) PD alternatives. As far as Tom's concerned, and we agree, if this is as good as it gets then you might as well get some PD educational programs for a few dollars a disk rather than much the same thing for five times as much.

We're all for good Amiga educational software. There's some perfectly acceptable stuff out there - the Insight Dinosaurs and Insight Technology packages for the CD32, for example. One product we'd particularly like to see, though nobody seems to have any idea how to make it, is a front end for IBM packages like Encarta that allows you to access their vast databases on your Amiga, without spending big bucks on a temperamental hardware emulator or dying of old age using a software one.

We're not after something "fancier". We just want to see something more functional. There are scores of freely distributable educational programs as good (or bad) as the Lascelles $20 packages, and there are plenty of books, just as full of Australian information, that do a better job than Australian Graphic Encyclopedia. Just because something is the only package of its kind for the Amiga, and hence unavoidably the best of its kind for the Amiga, does not mean that it's actually worth using.

And there are plenty of packages not produced by commercial educational software houses that are still useful for educational purposes. Paint programs, word processors, strategy games and the like all have their place in the classroom, and are likely to interest kids a great deal more than underproduced, poorly designed packages such as these. As you say, few Australian schools use Amigas, and in our opinion the reason is the low quality of a lot of Amiga educational software. There are some good packages, but IBM and Macintosh based packages blow the Amiga opposition into the weeds in quantity and quality, even without Australian-specific information, so it's scarcely surprising that they're the machines that get used. It would be wonderful if Amigas were popular in the education market, and it is quite possible that they will be, now that Amiga Technologies is forging ahead again. But that doesn't make bad software any better.

❑



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AMIGA Art Gallery

By Norman Cantrell

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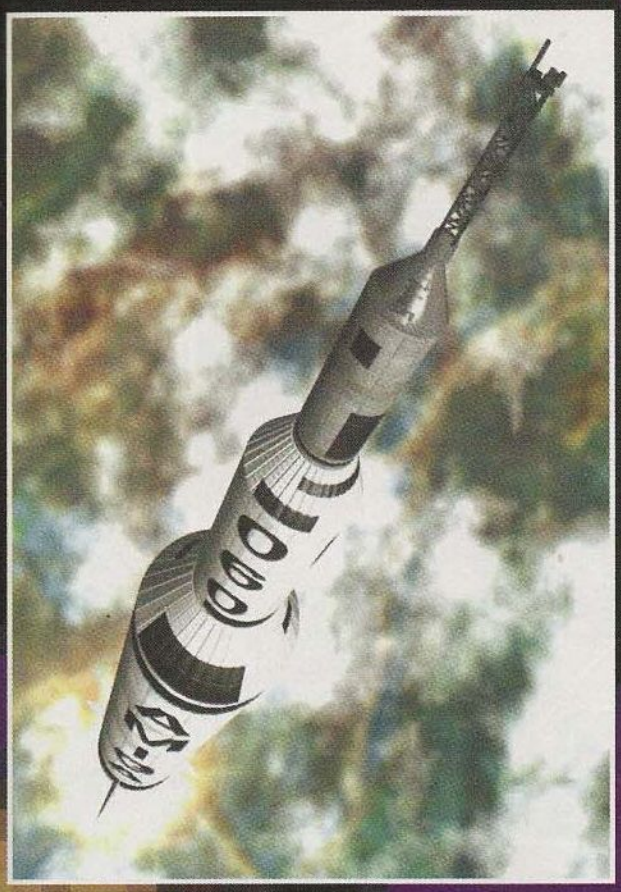

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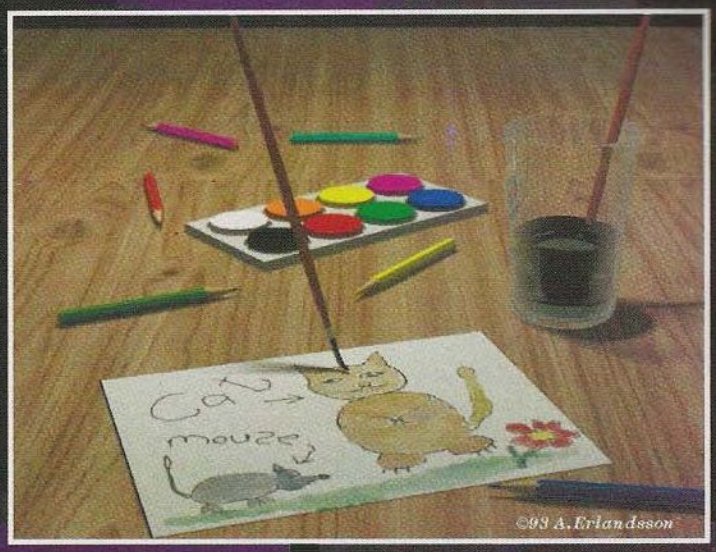

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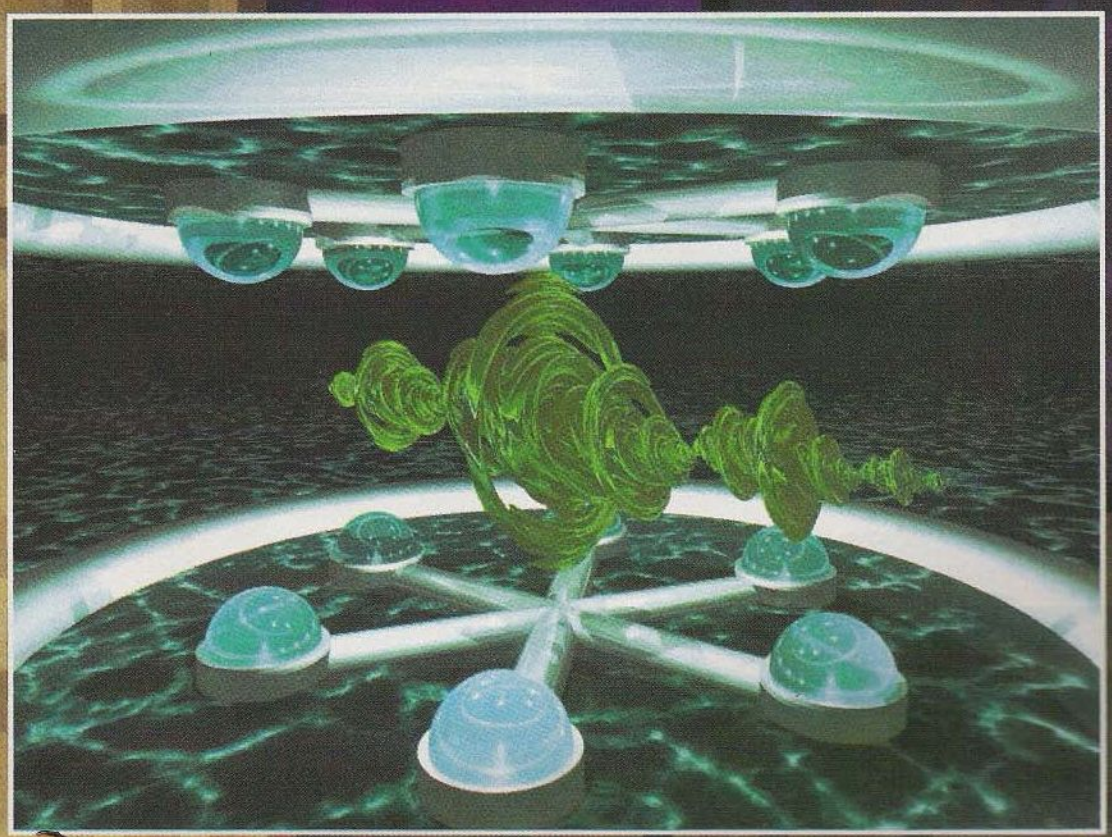

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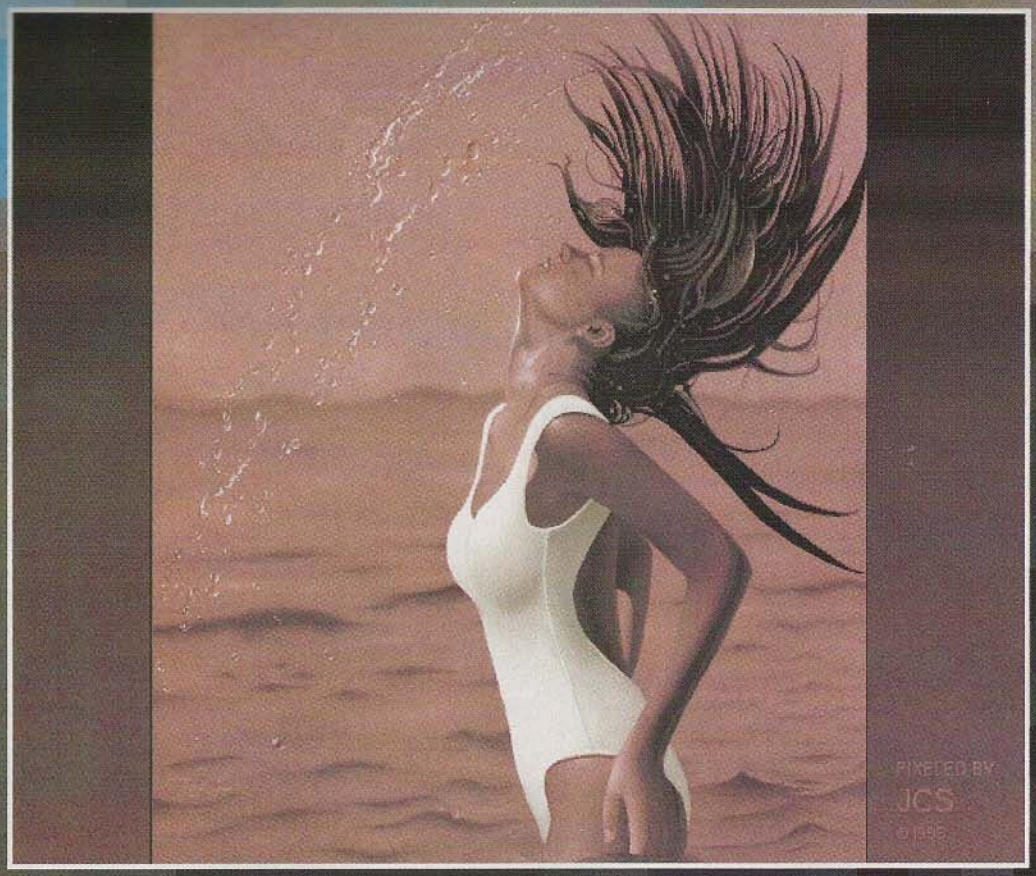

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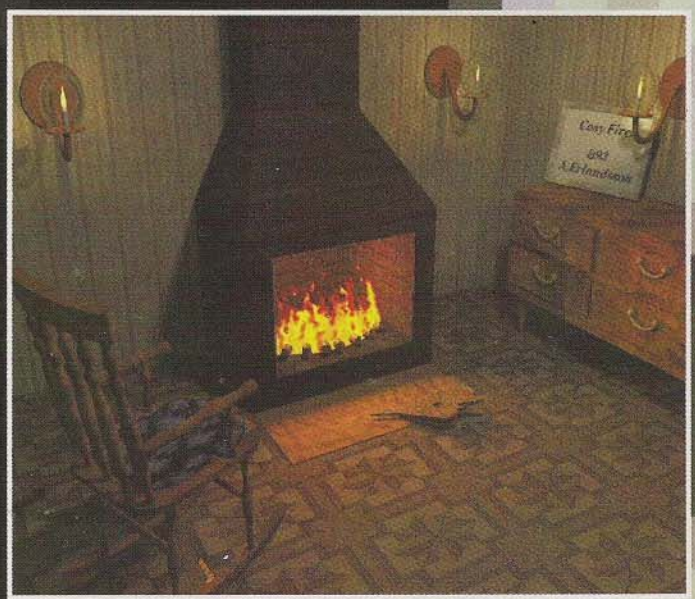
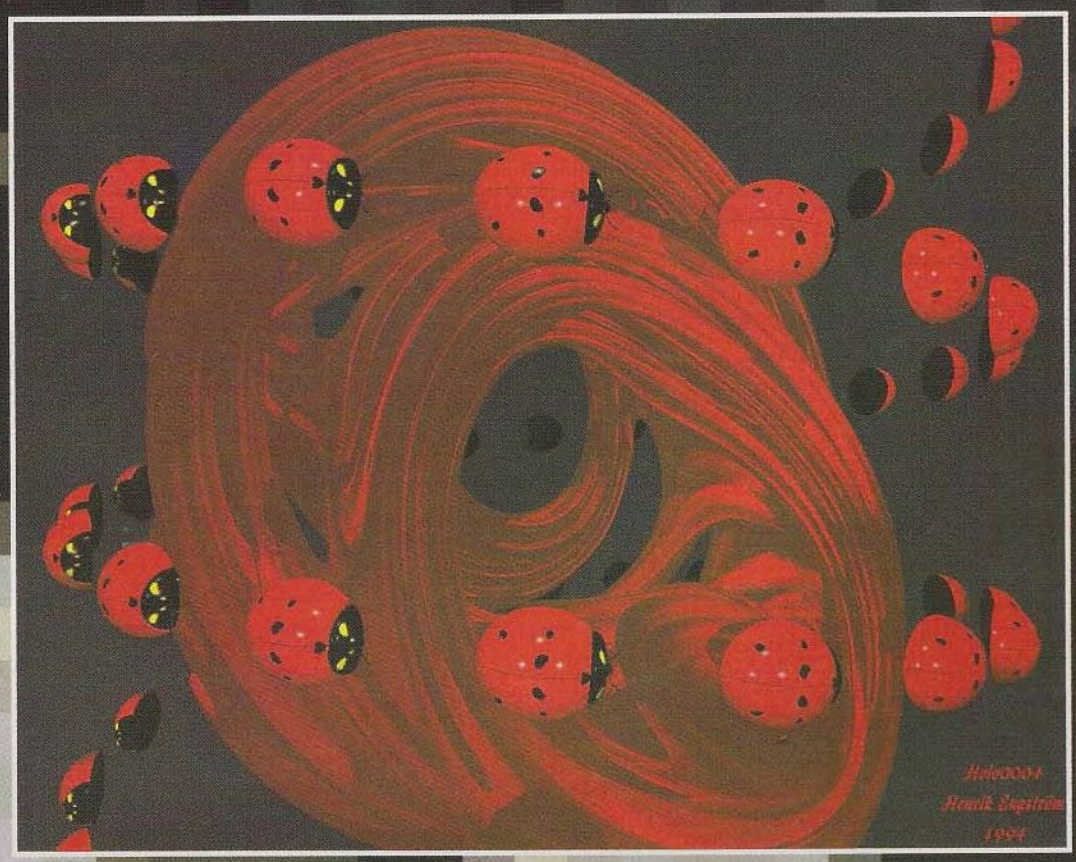


736 x 560, 24bit, Created with Real 3D.
By Anders Erlandsson.

800 x 600, 24bit, Created with Real 3D.
By Jesper Johag.

640 x 490, 24bit, Created with Lightwave 3.5.
By Kieron Robbins.



800 x 600, 24bit, Created with POV-Ray.
By Henrik Engstrom.

How to speak modem

By Daniel Rutter

One of the most confusing areas of personal computers is modems, and more specifically modem commands. While every decent modem comes with a manual detailing at least the standard, common Hayes compatible modem commands, this doesn't mean people actually read this section, much less understand it.

If two modems won't talk to each other, there are many possible reasons. In this age of supposed universal modem compatibility, it shouldn't matter how your modem's set up, as long as you have a modem capable of 2400 Bps operation or better and stick to the almost universal 8 data bits, no parity, 1 stop bit (8N1). You might not connect as efficiently as you should, but you should connect and stay connected and all should be rosily wonderful.

But all, frequently, isn't.

This is because there's some room for different interpretations in comms protocol specs, and if there isn't the modem makers tend to interpret anyway. Subtle differences in implementation of what are nominally identical systems can produce strange failures. Most are explicable after some detective work, but some are best classified as phase-of-moon (POM) related.

The usual symptom of incompatibility is two modems just plain refusing to connect, or refusing to connect at a speed they both apparently support. The problems can often be solved by adroit application of the appropriate commands, the standard for which was invented by those grandfathers of the modern modem, Hayes.

The commands listed here are the ones you're likely to use. There are more codes than I've listed, and every modem has its own swag of peculiar S registers and its own AT commands that you'll have to check your manual to decode, but the basic stuff is standard.

All of these commands, if sent by themselves, have to be prefixed with AT. You can use "at" as well, but if your AT is in lower case, any other alphabetic characters in your command have to be too.

If you're issuing several commands at once, such as in a modem initialisation string, you only need an AT at the start. Thus you can send AT&F&K0S0=2, which is the same as AT&F plus AT&K0 plus ATS0=2. You can insert spaces in between the commands (AT&F &K0 S0=2) if you like.

+++ - The standard escape code. If you're online and you type +++, your modem will drop to command mode. You're still connected, but nothing you type will be sent. This lets you tweak the modem without logging off.

A - Instant answer. ATA makes the modem immediately go off hook and try to answer an incoming call.

A/ - Repeat last command. This is the only command that doesn't have AT in front of it - it's just A/.

D - Dial. By itself, ATD makes your modem go off hook and initiate a connection as if it dialled the other modem - but without dialling. If you've hooked two modems together with a phone cable or you've already got a voice connection on the same line, it'll work. Issue ATD to one modem, ATA to the other, then hang up any phones.

If you follow D with a number, your modem will dial that number. If you prefix the number with T or P, the modem will dial in Tone or Pulse mode - most modems default to tone dial, and few telephone exchanges still require pulse. Nonetheless, many people still reflexively type ATDT to make sure they avoid prolonged clicking.

The D command has a few more options which you probably won't need to use; check your modem manual if you're curious.

E - E, for Echo, controls whether your modem will repeat keystrokes back to the terminal in command mode.

When you're sending commands to the modem, not sending what you type down the line, you'll see what you type if echo's turned on (ATE1) and you won't if it's off (ATE0). Your terminal program's "local echo" setting automatically displays every character you type as well as every character sent from the modem, and should be off, as it'll make you see everything ttwwiiccee..

H - H, for Hook, is not a command you should have to use - your terminal program can do it with a hotkey. +++ATH0 is the standard hang-up string; sent to a modem, it drops it to command mode and puts the modem back on hook. ATH1 takes a modem off-hook, and is pretty useless.

I - I, for Information, can be followed by a number from 0 to 9 depending on the modem, and what you get depends on what the modem manufacturers decided to put there. Manufacturers commonly muck about with these commands. Check your manual.

L - ATL0 or 1 sets internal speaker volume low, ATL2 is medium, ATL3 is high Some modems, for example Maestros, say OK to this command but don't actually do anything. Their volume control is a trimpot inside the modem. Happy twiddling.

M - ATM0 turns off the speaker, full stop. ATM1 is the default, and leaves the speaker on until a carrier's detected, then turns it off; ATM2 turns the speaker on all the time and will drive you mad, and ATM3 turns the speaker on during connect sequences, but not dialling.

N - To force your modem to connect at a specific speed, use ATN0. The speed is set by S register 37 (see below). ATN1, the default, leaves the modem free to choose its own speed.

O - If you've dropped to command mode with +++, ATO (letter O, not zero) puts you back online. This is the same as ATO0 (letter O, then zero); ATO1 also forces a retrain, where the modems renegotiate the connection.

S - S is the command for setting S registers, the modem's internal memory locations. You set an S register with ATSx=n, where x is the register number and n is the value. Type ATSn? to see the contents of register n. S registers you need to know about include:

0 - This is how many rings your modem will wait before automatically answering. ATS0=2 sets it to two rings, ATS0=0 will turn off auto answer.

6 - This S register sets the maximum time the modem will wait for a dial tone. You can set it from 2 to 255, in seconds, and it's handy if you're calling out on some antique multi-line system that takes a while to notice a phone's been picked up, or something.

7 - This is to carrier detect as S6 is to dial tone detect, and has the same possible values. If you're calling somewhere that takes a while to connect, crank up S7. Otherwise, keep it low, as it saves long periods of warbling.

10 - This register sets the delay, in tenths of a second from 1 to 255, between carrier dropping and the modem hanging up. If you're on a disgustingly bad line, ATS10=255 gives 25.5 seconds for the modems to find each other again. On clean lines, keep it lower.

11 - Sets the touch tone duration, from 50 to 255 milliseconds. Lower settings dial faster; set it too low and your exchange won't catch the beeps.

37 - Sets the transfer speed ATN0 locks the modem to. Value 0 locks to the speed the modem got its last AT command at; 1, 2 and 3 lock to 300Bps, 5 is 1200, 6 is 2400, 8 is 4800, 9 is 9600, 10 is 12200, 11 is 14400, 12 is 7200.

W - Write - See Z.

X - This deals with how the modem dials and what it says when it connects. ATX0 sends basic result codes on connect, and blind dials - it won't listen for a dialtone and won't detect busy tones. X1 gives extended codes but is otherwise the same. X2 is extended codes, still no busy detect, but the modem waits for dialtone. X3 is extended codes, busy detection, no dialtone detection, and X4 detects dialtone and busy and sends extended codes. Use the dumber X settings if your modem has trouble detecting dialtones or busy signals, otherwise use X4.

Z - The reset code. ATZ or ATZ0 is the same as turning off and on, and ATZ4 resets to factory settings. ATZ1 to ATZ3 set the three definable user settings; these start off as factory settings, but if you do ATZ2, for example, change S registers and other settings around and then do AT&W, you'll have saved the new settings as user setting 2.

&C - AT&C1, the normal setting, makes your modem only report DCD (Data Carrier Detect) if it really HAS detected a carrier and really DOES have a connection. AT&C0 makes it leave DCD on all the time. If your modem's DCD (or CD, as it's often labelled) light never goes off, it's been &C0-ed.

&D - This controls the modem's response to DTR - the Data Terminal Ready line which the computer sets to tell the modem it's alive and running a terminal program - DTR will turn off, or "drop" if you quit the terminal program via menu option, keystroke, crash or reboot. &D0 causes the modem to ignore DTR, which means crashes won't kill your connection. &D1 will drop the modem into command mode if DTR goes from on to off - if you crash, you can now rerun your terminal and send an ATO to get back online. &D2 makes the modem hang up, go to command mode and disable auto answer (ATS0=0) when DTR drops - this is the setting you use if you set "drop DTR to hang up" in your terminal program. &D3 will reset the modem if DTR drops.

&K - This is for changing flow control. RTS/CTS (Request To Send/Clear To Send) handshaking lets your modem and computer tell each other when they're being sent too much data to deal with, and invoke a pause while they pass the info on, and you can activate it with AT&K3. AT&K0 turns off flow control, and AT&K4 activates XON/XOFF flow control, the old software method that sends flow control information with the data and is not as good as RTS/CTS. AT&K5 activates "transparent" XON/XOFF, which is still not as good.

&R - This command also deals with CTS/RTS hardware handshaking. AT&R0 makes CTS behave properly, only turning on when there really are no data transfer problems. AT&R turns CTS on permanently.

Compression control - What AT command controls data compression (MNP-5) and error correction (MNP-4)? Good question. Every manufacturer seems to pick their own for this one - check your manual. Unless you're transferring a pile of uncompressed text or similar readily compressible data, leave MNP-5 off. If problems are happening, disable MNP-4 as well, as differing interpretations can cause arguments between modems.

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AD INDEX

Amadeus	40, 41	GSoft	73
Amitar Home Comp.	21	House of Computers	63
Brunswick	63	JEC Computers	63
Central Coast Graph.	63	MVB	6,7
Computer Affair	IBC	Natdisc	OBC
CompuParts	37	Pelham	63
Computer Magic	5	Prime Artifax	70,71
Computer Man	5	Scarlet	63
Desktop Utilities	63	Sigmacom	IFC,1,2,13
Diskotech	37	TriLogic	63
Fat Agnus PD	63	TV Graphics	5
Fonhof	49	Unitech Electronics P/L	9
		Vallhalla Games	63

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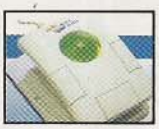

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